

Far West Trip

The Dollery's (Shane – Trip Leader)

Ben & Connor

Nathan & Josh

Brian & Lee Webster

The Budd's (Richard's Side)

Brendan's Family (Shane's Friend)

Friday 17/4 – Sydney to Nyngan

Nathan & I left a day early to head up to Nyngan and get settled. We met the Budd's at Lithgow McD's (famous landmark) for breakfast before heading off west. We had a slow steady pace with a stop at Shane's in Orange to drop off some supplies and catch up. From there we were heading to Dubbo then Nyngan but somehow ended up on the road to Parkes. (At the time we thought nothing of it but it was surely a sign of things to come). We corrected our mistake and managed to make Wellington for lunch. Stopped in a nice park where Connor couldn't resist jumping in the fountain clothes and all. After lunch we were off again setting a good pace that saw us head through Dubbo and make Nyngan about 4.30pm. We set camp and got the fire going while we watched the Budd's set up their new camper-trailer for the first time. Better that TV is all I will say. Happy hour followed by a nice campfire dinner saw us well into the night – a good start to a great trip.



Saturday 18/4 - Nyngan

A quiet relaxing day (except for Nathan), the Budd's & I took the chance to square away our vehicles and get sorted while Nathan decided he and Josh would ride into town exploring. They made the road before they had their first blow-out on the bike tyre – Josh's. They walked back and Josh stayed while Nathan rode into town to replace the tube & tyre (big spikes & burrs in the bush). As he walked out of the shop – he discovered he now had a blow-out – back in for a tube and tyre for his bike and he was now set. Walking and hitch-hiking back to camp he finally got the bikes repaired but decided that it was too dangerous to ride so we took the kids for a canoe ride up the river to break up the morning. Afternoon was nice and relaxing as we waited for the others to arrive. Fires were lit – kids bathed and happy hour commenced when Shane & Brendan arrived with campers and families in tow. Happy hour continued while our final members Brian & Lee arrived, set up and were joining us before I could even start my next Vodka – impressive. Dinner & drinks continued as we settled in for our next camp fire night.



Sunday 19/4 – Nyngan to White Cliffs

Up early and packed ready to go by 9.30am. The plan was to drive from Nyngan to White Cliffs. We had a long day driving, with a stop in Cobar for a look, morning tea and fuel. The kids had a play in the park to stretch their legs before we were off again. Next stop was the Emmendale Roadhouse just outside of Wilcannia for lunch. The kids were out again and running while more fuel and food were sorted. From there we ran through Wilcannia only stopping for me to fill my LPG (last chance till Broken Hill). Then onto White Cliffs for a late afternoon setup in the caravan park which didn't allow fires but had nice facilities that included electric BBQ's so we managed. Kids were showered and went off to bed and alcohol was consumed – a nice end to a long day driving.



Monday 20/4 – White Cliffs to Tibooburra (That Day) – By Giselle Budd

Distance to Tibooburra – approx 260kms

Estimated travel time – 3 – 3.5hrs

Actual distance travelled – 580kms

Actual time travelled – almost 8hrs

Emu close calls – 3

Kangaroo close calls - 2

The motto is usually what goes on tour stays on tour.....but in this case, it doesn't count ☺



The day started at a mediumly leisurely pace. Everyone was packed and ready to go by 9am, however there was important “sightseeing” to do prior to leaving White Cliffs.

Kids enjoying the toys in the underground shop of Top Level Opals



First off was the underground shop at “Top Level Opals” where Donna-Lee (one of the owners) gave everyone an insight into the opals from the area, and also about what it was like to live so far away from a regional centre – the “kids corner” was an important reason for our choice as it kept the kids quiet for over 10mins. We then visited the “Otto photo Gallery” to check out their pictures.



Cars lined up in the disused opal mine grounds in White Cliffs

Nathan then took us on a jaunt around some disused opal mine grounds in town and the opportunity for photos on a landscape unique to the area. It was then decided to double back and visit the underground motel. It would have been about this time that the locals probably wondered what was going on as six 4WD's drove the long way around town to the destination.



The Underground Motel was definitely worth the visit, with the kids especially enjoying the echo their voices created in the tunnels

This should have also been an indication of the rest of the day, but when Nathan suggested we take an “alternate road” to Tibooburra we all must have forgotten about his navigation skills around White Cliffs!!!

It has been mentioned that one of the group overheard the “alternate road” being discussed with the lady in the corner store, who advised that “you should be OK if you are in 4WD's but just make sure you match up the station names as you go”.

At a couple of intersections on the way discussion on the radio centered around whether or not the roads were on the navigators/GPS's in some of the cars but to us first timers we thought this was fairly normal. The road was rather rough, and extremely dusty with the 6 cars spread over more than 10kms in some places, which necessitated the relaying of radio messages.....which were crucial to avoid rougher parts of the road. So we travelled for a couple of hours and stopped for lunch at a little river flat under the few trees on the way, and at one stage had to quickly close the cars up as a little willy willy headed towards us. Little did we know that the dust from that one was going to be the least of our worries.



Lunch Stop

After about 1.5hrs Brian thought he saw a lock on the road.....sure enough, the rattles and bangs on the road had broken one of the locks on our trailer.....thankfully Brian had spotted it before our gear could be spread over 10+kms!!! It was as we were fixing the trailer that everyone realised we were a little “off track”.....We were supposed to be heading north, it was 4pm, and the sun was on the drivers side of the car for over an hour.....not a good sign - and then we had 3 navigators/GPS’s all having vastly different readings:

- 135kms to Tibooburra
- 285kms to Tibooburra
- And the trip leaders showing 168,000ft to Tibooburra!!!!

It was time to refer to the good old fashioned map!!!

So after another 45mins we finally reached the main road from White Cliffs to Tibooburra.....White Cliffs was only 80kms away.....I am only new to this but it sounds like our “alternate road” took us about 5hrs to travel 80kms?????

With kids needing a break – four of the cars stopped for a rest.....with our youngest only just settling after yelling at us for over an hour there was no way we were stopping and continued to Tibooburra with Brian and Lee keeping us company.

We finally arrived in Tibooburra at 7.30pm, with Ben and Nathan close by. After setting up the tent the call came in that Shane (the trip leader) was stuck at the Tibooburra Roadhouse.....he had run out of fuel and the Patrol had had enough for the day and wasn’t going to re-start. So Brian kindly went and towed the trailer back to the camp ground and then went back and retrieved Shane and his car. Thinking that we could settle back for a late “happy hour” there was a yell and Brendan’s jockey wheel had broken with all the rattle and bumps along the way. A stack of bricks was soon sourced and we had plenty to talk about over a couple of late drinks.....thank goodness it was a two night stay and we didn’t have to pack up again early the next morning as there were a number of repairs to be done – thanks Nathan (Mr Fixit ☺) .

Tuesday 21/4 – Tibooburra to Cameron’s Corner & Back

Up early to reassess the damage from yesterday. Brian went off to help sort out Shane and get his GU going again – no manual bleed but eventually they got him started. Meanwhile Nathan was on the trusty bike after another flat the day before and was off to god knows where. Some took the chance for showers, do some washing (Giselle wiped out the deluxe camper clothes line – very impressed). Nathan soon returned with a welder and hammer drill to aid with the repairs from the day before. While Nathan welded the dolly wheel back on Brendan’s Cub Camper, I helped Richard drill and bolt the rear of his camper to lock it for the next days driving (Tibooburra to Broken Hill). With everyone squared away we saddled up and did a day trip out to Cameron’s Corner to pay our respects at the pub and take some snaps. We discovered that we were not the first from the club to make the trip with stickers plastered on the rail showing the club in fine form. We had the beer at the pub as required and some lunch before jumping back in and heading back to camp. For something different we decided to have a camp fire with happy hour, dinner and alcohol all rolled into a 3-4hr evening. We laid down some plans for the next day and went to bed.



Wednesday 22.4 – Tibooburra to Menindee (via Broken Hill and Mutawintji)

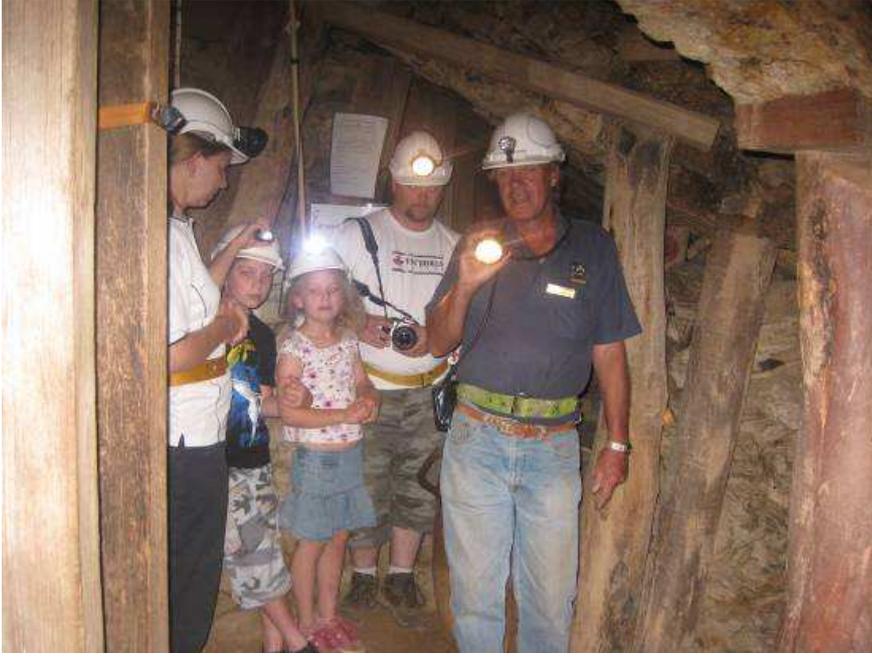
We had planned to visit Mutawintji and organised to meet a tour from Broken Hill there at 11am so we were up early and on the road by 7.30am (sort of). It was a long drive and discussions were held over the radio about the route we should take. Some maps showed that a back way could save us time but other maps showed that it could be a private road and we had to go almost all the way to Broken Hill and double back to Mutawintji from there. As you could imagine there were concerns about back ways to Nathan and I headed down to do a Reccie while the others waited. It was about a 15k round trip and turned out to be a dead end into someone's place. So the others headed off down the highway Nathan and I made our way back and decided to skip the visit and head straight to Broken Hill. We couldn't contact the others so we headed off and made Broken Hill early afternoon.

We set up in the Caravan Park deciding to spend the night in Broken Hill before meeting the others in Menindee the next day. By late afternoon we were receiving calls that the side trip had not gone to plan and we would be joined by others very soon. The Budd's rolled into not having made it there at all (Declan decided he would scream the entire way and sent them mad – they were never the same again). Brendan had to leave his Landcruiser in Broken Hill for the next day – a stone had come through his rear window and shattered it so he was staying. Finally Brian & Lee arrived having actually made it to Mutawintji and the Dollery's were the last to join us so it was decided we spend the night in Broken Hill instead. Food was eaten, dust washed out of everything and alcohol started to appear. The end to a long day!



Thursday 23/4 – Broken Hill to Menindee via Silverton

We decided to split up for the next part of the trip. Brian, Lee & the Budd's were going to remain in Broken Hill to look around, explore and relax, while Nathan & I were going to Shane and Brendan to Menindee to stay a Balaka Station. First we took in the sights at Silverton including the pub, jail, art galleries and stopped and explored down the Daydream Mine. Then back to Broken Hill to restock supplies and pick up Brendan's Landcruiser. Finally at dusk we set off for Balaka station. It was dark before we arrived with only one casualty – a kangaroo attached Shane's camper trailer but came off second best – the rest made it in unscathed and we set up in the dark not being able to see much under the lights, just that we were at the waters edge. Fire / food / alcohol / bed – end of a long day



Friday 24/5 – Menindee

Woke up to discover that we were camped by a private lake about 5k's wide and full of water, Cows were wondering about 100m away from the campsite and we had the place to ourselves – fantastic. We spent the morning exploring, found a tinny and yabby pots that we put out later in the afternoon, plenty of wood for the fire that night and enjoyed the station. We decided to head into Menindee for lunch and to explore Kinchega National Park. After a while Nathan & I decided a relaxing afternoon by the lake sounded better than another drive so we left the others to return to Balaka to start the fire – have some beers and let the kids run riot.

The others returned later in the afternoon and we set about a camp oven dinner / celebration as the trip started to wind up. The Webster's & Budd's had decided to bypass Menindee and head for Dubbo so Nathan & I decided to head out in the morning and meet them in Dubbo. The dinner was fantastic, oven after oven full of food was prepared, cooked and eaten. Neville, the owner of Balaka joined us and we celebrated well into the night with fantastic stories from Neville about the area and the characters. Finally I headed off to bed for an early start and the others soon followed



Saturday 25/5 – Menindee to Dubbo

Nathan and I were up early and gone by 6.30am, Connor was still asleep in his booster seat and didn't wake up until Emmendale Roadhouse. The night before Neville gave us one piece of advice, between here and Wilcannia – DON'T STOP FOR ANYTHING. He put it a different way but you get the idea. We made it through and stopped at Emmendale for morning tea, fuel and were off again. Cobar – more fuel (my LPG) and off to Nyngan for lunch. Stopped in a nice park for a bite and let the kids run for a while before it was back in the car and off again – straight through to Dubbo. On the phone Brian & Lee were about 100k's behind us and the Budds had set up and were waiting.

Made it into Dubbo late afternoon and set up, with Brian and Lee not far behind us. It was nice to have a shower after a few days and I had run out of clothes so I washed and dried but Giselle wouldn't share her fancy clothes line so \$3 in the dryer and I was set. None of us could be bothered cooking so Brian delivered woodfire pizza's for all and we gladly tucked in before settling in for our last night together. We drifted off around 10pm as the temp. dropped and rain set in.



Sunday 26/5 – Dubbo to Home

Nathan was up early and gone having to work the next day, while the rest of us slowly packed up and got organised. We made a steady pace as the rain followed us all the way back to Sydney. We stopped in Wellington for lunch and just before Lithgow for fuel and a break before heading down the Bells Line back home. It was slow with plenty of traffic making their way back to Sydney but we made it just before dusk. We said goodbye to Brian & Lee at Richmond and the Budd's and I headed for the M7 where I left them at Baulkham Hills.

A fantastic holiday that was a great experience, new friends were made and I would like to thank everyone for creating such a great memory.

Cheers Ben.

