



# Desert Sky News



"It's All About The Experience – Yours and Ours "

Volume 10 Issue 3

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October 2008

If it seems a while since our last newsletter, it is because there was no edition in July.

With a Cooper Creek trip closely followed by two Birdsville/Innamincka departures, things became a little busy!

One of the big activities in the Innamincka area this year has been the construction of the Queensland/South Australia/New South Wales oil pipeline link. The project, undertaken by Epic Energy, will join the South West Queensland pipeline at Ballera (north of Innamincka) to Moomba's Adelaide pipeline and provide a delivery point into the Moomba to Sydney pipeline.

The construction will facilitate the supply of long term, competitively priced coal seam gas to southern markets. The link from Bellara will comprise approximately 180 kms of pipeline, and work is expected to be completed by December 2008.

With around 30 trucks per day transporting pipes from Broken Hill to Innamincka, many roads in the area are rough and corrugated!

Upgrade of the Nappa Merrie road from the SA Border to the Dig Tree turn-off continues, with Bulloo Shire working to seal this section at a cost of \$15M by the end of this year.



An interesting sign has appeared at the Dig Tree junction, announcing a Road House and Caravan Park together with all amenities is to be built on the site !! The logistics of building such a venture

would appear huge, not the least of which would be the supply of water!

Our July Birdsville trip took us through the tiny south west Queensland town of Betoota, and it was a great opportunity to visit the grave of "Ziggy" Remienko, at the rear of the hotel - the only building in the town.



Many of you will know the respect and affection we had for Ziggy, who was the publican for 38 years, and the town's only resident for much of that time.

In other news from the Outback, Lyall Oldfield (of the Oasis Cafe), has moved to the premises formerly occupied by his cousin Eric, and known as the "Trading Post" in Railway Terrace North. The old Oasis Cafe building is now closed.

Pam and Phil at Mungerannie have completed a great renovation to the eastern end of the bar in their hotel, and Birdsville artist Wolfgang John has been busy with two exhibitions of his paintings—the first at Quilpie, and the second, "My Desert Home" which was part of the SALA Festival (South Australian Living Artists) Exhibition at the Mallala Hotel South Australia.

Work continues on the Innamincka Hotel "Outer Mincka" dining room, and at Cameron Corner the General Store is on the market for sale - though it will be hard to replace such a character as Bill Mitchell - the present proprietor.



Some of you may remember the article in our September 2007 newsletter about the submarine at Mt Ive Station. Well it so happened that on our Gawler Ranges trip this year we met up with a couple of members of the team that built the "Mt Ive Submarine". They had returned for a stay, and were planning to set a world speed record for a gopher on Lake Gairdner. (The gopher appeared to be rather modified by the way it was being put through some preliminary paces around the accommodation block !).

The same group entertained us with a fireworks display one evening!

At Wudinna, we viewed the progress of the sculpture which is being carved out of local granite on-site, by artist Marijan Bekic and his son David. With some 400 tonne of granite on-site to work from, the "Australian Farmer" will stand about 8 metres tall and be landscaped to include recognition of contributors to the project. The "Australian Farmer" reflects the commitment and spirit of rural people as they initially developed and continue to maintain our rural communities. Information and progress photos can be found on the project website at <http://wudinnagranitesculpture.com/>



*On our trips through the northern agricultural areas, we have observed around the Tarlee area crops resembling a broad bean. It is in fact Faba bean.*



**F**aba bean, *Vicia faba*, is a winter growing pulse, or food legume crop.

It originated in the Middle East in the pre-historic period, and has since spread throughout Europe, North Africa, and Central Asia. It spread to China over 2,000 years ago via traders along the Silk Road, to South America in the Columbian period, and more recently to Canada and Australia.

Faba bean was first grown commercially for grain in South Australia in the early 1980s, and is now cultivated in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia. Small areas are grown in Tasmania and southern Queensland.

It is a cool season crop in Australia, planted in autumn and harvested in late spring–early summer.

China is the largest faba bean producer, with Australia ranking about fourth. The Australian area has increased steadily since the start of the 1990s to near 180,000 ha.

The crop is planted in mid to late autumn and grows slowly during early winter. It develops rapidly from July to September during its flowering and podding stages, when daytime temperatures are in the range 15–25°C. Flowering stops as temperatures approach 30°C.

There are three main reasons for growing this crop:

- Cash flow through marketing dry, coarse grain.
- As a component of a rotation based on winter or summer cereals or cotton.
- Green manure where soils have been degraded in organic and physical fertility.

Faba bean plants may grow to a height of 2 m at maturity, but Australian crops are usually less than 1.5 m tall. The plant is erect, and produces stems from its base.

In Australia and other developed countries, their value in human diets is becoming increasingly identified with their potential to improve human health and reduce the risk of chronic degenerative diseases like coronary heart disease, bowel cancer, diabetes, obesity, constipation and diverticular



South Australia has dominated faba bean production. Faba bean is grown primarily as a high quality grain for human consumption with Egypt being the principal market. Prices of between \$200-\$350 per tonne for food grade faba beans have been received in recent years.

A significant proportion of Australia's faba bean crop is also used for animal feed and the demand is likely to continue to grow.



## Spring Gully Probus Club

We were fortunate to have two bus trips to The Flinders Ranges with members from Spring Gully Probus Club—Bendigo (Vic).

The weather was good, and we were able to enjoy “outdoor dining” in Arkaroola, plus some fun around the campfire! A highlight was the world renowned “Ridgetop Tour” to Siller's Lookout.

On each trip some members had an early morning plane flight over Rawnsley Park, with spectacular views of Wilpena Pound.



We really enjoyed meeting and travelling with the two groups.

## Orroroo

Declining population, community spirit and health are the three main problems the drought has brought to the area around Orroroo.

The committee on the Drought Policy Review had their second last meeting of their national tour in Orroroo this month and were very impressed by the presentation of the effects of drought made by the community.

Chairman of the Orroroo and Carrieton Council Kathy Bowman, who is also a farmer's daughter and wife gave a clear picture to the committee what is happening to her town and what needs to be done.

"We have declining mental health leading to chronic illness, declining population, reduced community sustainability, reduced socialisation, "Reduced volunteering and increased community costs and flat real estate values."

She says there needs to be reinvestment in rural communities with government basing services out in regional centres not base them all in Adelaide

## Moving Forward

**D**esert Sky Tours was registered as a business on 26th July 1995.

What began as a dream over 13 years ago in the Simpson Desert grew into a viable small business which has taken many hundreds of people over many thousands of kilometres.

The initial business plan was to operate for 5 years—bearing in mind that many small business which start up fail within that period for a variety of reasons.

When the 5 years came, we found the business was financially sound, people were still booking on trips and occasionally we were having fun!

We decided to continue on to 10 years, and a large group of people attended the celebrations on Sunday 6th November 2005 in Christ The King Hall Lockleys. It was a wonderful occasion and testimony to the many friendships we have formed through the business.

And now as we move forward to 2009 and our 14th year, it is again time to take stock and assess the future.

The enthusiasm for each trip remains, however we feel 15 years will complete a chapter in the Desert Sky story.

Accordingly, the coach tours will continue until July 2010, after which we will offer personalised 4WD trips only.

Now, how does this affect business?

**Our 2009 itinerary is published in this newsletter . The Birdsville, Cooper Creek/Innamincka, Flinders Ranges, Gawler Ranges are the last departures we will offer in the coach vehicle.**

In 2010 departures will be limited to trips between March and June—ie

Wilson's Promontory, Painted Desert, Back O'Bourke, Kangaroo Island.

There will be no coach trips after July 2010.

## Moving Forward (cont'd)

Commencing July 2010 we will concentrate on our personalised 4WD trips. These will visit many of the destinations we have offered by coach, plus favourites such as Coongie Lakes, Sky Trek, Southern Flinders. More details about these trips will be published in 2009.

### New trip for 2009

Our Christmas 2007 trip "Rumba In Tumba" was a great success and we are keen to do it again! - but at a different time of the year.

We have booked all rooms in the Tumby Bay Marina Motel for 4 consecutive nights from Wednesday 18th November 2009.

The Motel is situated just across the causeway and opposite the Mangrove Board Walk entrance. The rooms have all facilities, and there is an in ground swimming pool and barbeque area .

We travel to Tumby Bay on the SeaSA ferry across Spencer Gulf from Wallaroo to Lucky Bay (Cowell), and on the return trip drive through Whyalla , Pt Augusta and Pt Germein.

Other highlights of the trip include:

- Trinty Haven Scenic Drive
- Poonindie Mission Church
- Port Lincoln (visit the new Hotel)
- Sleaford and Coffin Bays
- Koppio Museum
- Cummins and the West Coast



We even experience a horse and trolley ride with Clydesdale horses!!

## Changing beds in '09

There are several changes to our accommodation in 2009. the new venues are:

- **Acacia Ridge Motel—Pt Augusta** which will be our accommodation on last night of trips to The Painted Desert and Gawler Ranges
- **Granites Motel—Tibooburra** which we visit on the return leg of our Birdsville and Cooper Creek trips.
- **Meeniyah Motel Meeniyah Vic** Meeniyah is located only 30mins from the beaches of Wilson's Promontory, and will be our "base" for exploring the Promontory and surrounding areas.
- **Old Willyama Motel—Broken Hill** Recently refurbished, this motel offers a very comfortable room and great meals on the last night of our Birdsville/Innamincka and Cooper Creek trips.

## Kangaroo Island

Our last trip for this year—4 days on Kangaroo Island—departs 14th November 2008 and still has a *few* seats available!

Staying 3 consecutive nights at the Comfortable Wisteria Motel which overlooks Nepean Bay in Kingscote, the trip is relaxing in pace and breathtaking in scenery.

Four full days are spent on the Island—and we visit not only the regular attractions of Seal Bay, Remarkable Rocks, Admiral's Arch but also a day trip along the north and western coasts, visiting Emu Bay, Stokes Bay, Snelling Beach and Western River Cove.

The package price \$875pp includes the Sea Link Ferry cruise!!.

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## Anna Creek Station

The following item is from *The Australian* - September 13th 2008:

**R**andall Crozier stands in the barren cattle paddock, frowning at the drought-bleached desert sand.

"Hard to imagine isn't it? This was all under water in 2004," he says. "The creek was 300 metres wide."

The local Aboriginal name for the area is Wadiwarriganna, meaning "slowly moving water". Today, cattle bones lie among the dust. Crozier, 51, is manager of the world's largest cattle station, Anna Creek in South Australia, but soon he will have no cattle to run on it.



A few days ago, his stockmen mustered the last hungry cows from the 3000sq km paddock behind where he is standing.

Soon they and every other animal on the property will be sold and the station left to stand empty until it rains. "The world's a changing place," Crozier says.

"The run of it here used to be that one year in every three you got a bit of a dry time, a

tough year -- lately it's been a little continuous."

Despite its size -- at 24,000sqkm, Anna Creek is bigger than Israel and uses its own road-train to shuttle herds between paddocks -- the station provides a microcosm of the trials of rural Australia today.

The station is one among an empire of pastoral properties collected by the late Sidney Kidman that the "Cattle King" believed could withstand any drought. But the past few years, which the Bureau of Meteorology describes as the worst since the Federation Drought more than a century ago, have savaged even Kidman's realm.

As the vegetation failed at Anna Creek, Crozier began to send his livestock away, trucking those he could to other Kidman properties although most were sold. A few years ago there were more than 18,000 Santa Gertruda cattle; today there are about 1500, with the last expected to be gone next month.

The station's human population followed. Once there were more than 20 stockmen; today there are just two and they will leave within weeks. When they go, only Crozier, his head stockman and the station cook will remain, waiting for rain.

"There's never been a drought in history that hasn't broken," he says.

Greg Campbell, managing director of the firm Kidman founded, Kidman & Co, says the company understands that drought is inevitable.

The company's Macumba station, north of Anna Creek, has been de-stocked this year. At Helen Springs, in the Northern Territory, the wet season failed, forcing the company to truck 36,000 cattle off the station.

It is the combination of drought and rising wheat and fuel prices that has hit hardest, Campbell says. Two West Australian Kidman properties, Ruby Plains and Sturt Creek, have been put up for auction, but attracted no bids. It is getting harder to find people to take what jobs remain. There are vacancies at almost every Kidman property. This is partly because of the higher wages in mining, and also because inland Australia is becoming a tougher place to live.

## Roxby Downs Street Names

**I**f you have ever strolled the streets of Roxby, and looked at the street signs, you may have thought....what does that name actually mean?



When the town first opened, the naming of the streets was a task set forth by the State Government, who chose a list of names to be considered.

These names range from all over the state, from lakes and springs, stations, flora and fauna and influential people.

People may recognise street names such as Norman Place, Richardson Place, Hamilton Court and Phibbs Court, to name a few.

Each of these streets is named after people, all of whom had a significant impact on this state. Richardson Place was named after Lake Richardson, which in turn was named after the original mail contractor of the area.

Phibbs Court was named after Phibbs Spring, which was discovered by G Phibbs, a member of BH Babbage's 1858 exploring party.

While these streets were named indirectly after people, both Norman Place and Hamilton Court are named directly after two influential men. Hamilton Court is named after Police Commissioner Gordon Hamilton and Norman Place was awarded in honour to Labor politician Norman Foster, whose critical vote allowed the township of Roxby Downs to proceed.

Apart from these few people, the town's streets are also creatively named after creatures and plant life. Aquila Boulevard was named after the Wedge Tail Eagle, for Aquila is the star constellation of the eagle.

Pogona is a bearded dragon, Tiliqua is a lizard and Planigale is a small carnivorous animal.

And for those with an eye for creativity, Emeroo Court is a combination of Australia's national fauna, the Emu and Kangaroo.

Each name was selected by Council from a list and considered in relation to its relevance, uniqueness and ability to flow with street types, such as Place, Boulevard, Court and Drive.

"You don't want a name that sounds foolish with a street type," said Councillor Trevor Kroemer. "Cacatua Close has a far better sound than Cacatua Boulevard."

## Great Outback Cattle Drive

The Great Australian Outback Cattle Drive will go ahead in 2010 after funding commitments from the South Australian Government and Australian Federal Government.

The Event is set to leverage off a recent partnership between Tourism Australia and Twentieth Century Fox to promote Australia the movie, starring Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman.

Chief Executive of the South Australian Tourism Commission, Andrew McEvoy says "Millions of people around the world, through the film and DVD release, will be exposed to Australia and be captivated by its stunning landscape, its characters and its unique culture. The beauty and diversity of the country, as well as its European and Aboriginal history as explored in the movie, reflect many of the experiences visitors can get on a holiday here in South Australia."

Scheduled for release in Australia in November 2008, Australia is the creation of acclaimed writer, producer and director, Baz Luhrmann, whose trip on the 2005 The Great Australian Outback Cattle Drive in South Australia provided inspiration for the film.

## Innamincka News

Geodynamics recently advised that the drilling of Jolokia 1 in the Cooper Basin is progressing well with exciting prospects for its hot rocks power Generation project.

The 244 mm (9 5/8") diameter casing has been run successfully to its design depth of 3,776 metres and Geodynamics advised that at a depth of approximately 3,805 metres, the first small fracture in Jolokia was intersected.

This is exciting news as it confirms existence, earlier than expected, that the Jolokia location has water saturated over pressured granites consistent with the three Habanero wells.

The forward drilling program will now focus on completing the well to intersect the target fracture zone.

## Innamincka News (cont'd)

The casing and cement job has been pressure tested to prove its integrity, and drilling has commenced in the 216mm (8½") open hole section.

The current depth is 3,818 metres. Jolokia 1 is located approximately 9 km from Habanero and is targeting fractured granites at a similar depth known to be 10°C hotter than the Habanero wells. Its target well depth is 4,250 metres.

## Birdsville News

Organisers of this year's Birdsville Cup in outback Queensland say the horse racing event injected more than \$2 million into the local economy.

Spokesman Gary Brook says about 5,000 people attended the races and Evading, trained by veteran Charlie Prow, won the feature event.

Mr Brook says the punters were excited after last year's meeting was cancelled due to the horse flu outbreak, and the festivities continued into the night.

"Whilst everyone had a good time last year it's obviously a huge chunk of the race meeting missing without the horses, so I think everyone was excited," he said. "Everyone wanted to be a part of it, we had a lot of successful other events and activities over the weekend, so everyone certainly had a good time. I think from a racing perspective we're all pleased to actually have the horses back."

Hundreds of people were stranded in Windorah, in Queensland's Channel Country, as they made their way to the Birdsville Races.

Rain over the weekend temporarily closed the main road to Birdsville from the east. Barbara Mason from the Windorah Hotel said the town had been transformed by caravans and holiday-makers, and people were forced to sleep in the community hall because all other accommodation was booked out.

"There were caravans absolutely everywhere, every spare block in town there were caravans, people sleeping in the town hall, people sleeping on verandahs, there were people everywhere."

## Itinerary for 2009



### Birdsville/Innamincka (9 days) ~ \$2050 pp

Saturday July 18  
Saturday August 15

### Cooper Creek/Innamincka (7 days) ~ \$1625 pp

Wednesday June 24

### Flinders Ranges/Arkaroola (5 days) ~ \$1050 pp Including "Ridgetop Tour"

Sunday September 20  
Wednesday October 14

### Gawler Ranges (5 days) ~ \$895 pp

Monday September 7

### Kangaroo Island (4 days) ~ \$925 pp

Tuesday March 24  
Tuesday March 31

### Mungo/Hattah National Parks (5 days) ~ \$945 pp

Saturday April 18

### Tumby Bay & Eyre Peninsula (5 days) ~ \$845 pp

Wednesday November 18

### William Creek & The Painted Desert (9 days) ~ \$1845 pp

Friday May 1

### Wilson's Promontory & Great Ocean Rd (9 days) ~ \$1825 pp

Sunday March 1

## Personalised 4WD Tours

### Coongie Lakes & The Cooper Creek (7 days) - \$1995 pp

Thursday May 21

### Mungo & Hattah National Parks (5 days) ~ \$1075 pp

Tuesday February 27

### Sky-trek & The Flinders (5 days) - \$995 pp

Friday August 28

### Yorke Peninsula & Southern Flinders (5 days) - \$995 pp

Tuesday October 27

Other Personalised tours in 4WD vehicle can be arranged by request

## Time for Maths?

*The following is taken from a bronze plaque in the sundial park at Arkaroola Village:*

For your information—

Arkaroola local time equals Central Standard Time less 10 mins 50 secs calculated as follows:-

Central Standard Time Meridian is Long. 142°E

Arkaroola's Meridian is :Longitude 139° 21' E

That is, it is behind CST by 2°40' of earth arc.

Which is equal to 10mins 50 msecs.

(NB 1 minute of arc approximates 4 minutes of rotation time).

Some (useless) Basic facts:

Earth's equatorial circumference	=	81,700 kms
Earth's circumference at Latitude of Arkaroola	=	7,600 kms
Area of Australia	=	7,605,760 sqr Kms
Area of Arkaroola Sanctuary	=	610 Sqr Kms
Ave, elevation of Australia	=	300 metres

Highest elevation on Arkaroola (Freeling Heights)	=	944 metres
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Earth makes 1 complete Rev. about sun every 365 days 5 hours 48mins 46 secs.

Earth moves in its orbit around sun at 218,000 kms/hour.

Earth rotates on its axis at an equat. speed of approx 3300 km/hr

You are now rotating around the earth axis at about 2700 km/hr

Arkaroola's latitude is 39°19'S Long. is 139°20'E

Reg Sprigg D.Sc.

March 13 1982

## More from Arkaroola!

AN ancient underwater reef discovered in South Australia's Outback could unlock the secrets of the world's climate change history, scientists say.

Located in South Australia's Flinders Ranges, the 650-million-year-old reef existed during a period of humid tropical climate between two major ice ages.

It had an escarpment 1.1km high - or 10 times higher than the Great Barrier Reef. It is the only known reef to date to that precise time in history - although an 800-million-year-old reef has been discovered in Arctic Canada.

University of Melbourne researcher Jonathan Giddings says this extreme climate change from ice age to tropical conditions and back again took place 750 to 550 million years ago - hundreds of millions of years before dinosaurs roamed the Earth - and was one of the most tumultuous climatic periods of Earth's history.

"This reef is an internationally significant discovery because it provides a significant step forward in showing the extent of climate change in Earth's past and the evolution of ancient reef complexes - and it also contains fossils which may be of the earliest known primitive animals," Mr Giddings said.

"From a climate change point of view, this reef provides an important record of what was happening in the ocean 650 million years ago.

"The chemistry of the reef and other sediments forming in the ocean at the same time show the ocean was poorly mixed, and this may have had an effect on Earth's climate at that time by allowing carbon to be trapped in the ocean's depths."

Unlike the Great Barrier Reef, this reef was not made by coral - it was constructed by microbial organisms and other more complex organisms that have not been previously discovered. The limestone deposits originally laid down by these organisms can be seen by satellite, revealing the full extent of the reef.

The scientists are referring to the reef as Oodnaminta Reef, given it is located near an old hut called Oodnaminta Hut.

Associate Professor Malcolm Wallace says the reef is exposed at ground level, making it very easy for scientists to read its secrets.

"The section of the reef showing at ground level is around 20km wide, demonstrating just how big this ancient reef was," he said.

"This whole section can be driven or walked along, which makes it extremely easy for scientists to travel back through the reef's 5-10-million-year history in the space of minutes if you are driving."

## Desert Sky in New Zealand (again!)

Thanks to Doreen we have again featured in "NZ 4WD" Magazine. The Feb 2008 edition contained an article about our Gawler Ranges trip, while September 2008 edition carries an article featuring the Mungo NP trip. These are professionally written feature articles, and are a great advertisement for us.