



What's an adventure without challenges, right? I'm going to spoil this, the last of my 3 part adventure (here's [1](#) and [2](#)) up to Abminga Station. We resorted to a Plan E in the end. Read on to see what happened.

## Saturday 10 September - Eringa to ... Eringa (via Mt Dare)

Packed up, ready to go early. Daily check of vehicles. All okay. Backed up to the trailer to hitch up. Disaster! One wheel on the trailer was at an odd angle. The bearing had disintegrated. No indication of when it had happened. After taking off the wheel and the hub it seemed there was no damage to axle, hub or wheel, but there was no bearing, it had disintegrated. This trailer was less than a year old, so I hadn't bothered with basic pre-trip checks and was not carrying spare bearings. One learns all the time.

Sat phone again. RAA could not help for at least two days in spite of our extensive cover. So, which is closer Coober Pedy or Oodnadatta? Look at the map. Mt Dare has a workshop and they are closer. Gave them a ring. "Yes, we have lots of trailer bearings." "See you as soon as we can." Leaving our friend to write up her notes and enjoy a day in the sun, my wife and I set off once again for Mt Dare.



*I've spoken a lot about Mt Dare in this series. Here's the hotel. Image credit: [Mt Dare Hotel](#).* This little side trip gave us a bit of a laugh and cheered us up. When we first arrived at Eringa there was quite a deep puddle leading to the Eringa Bridge. Armed with the advice from the Mt Dare people, we just slowed down and went through. No problem. On our way back to Mt Dare with the trailer bearings we charged straight through. There was a couple on the far



side, who we recognised from the Mt Dare campground, shoes off and just about to test the water depth. Slowing so as not to splash them we stopped, and being a smart Alec, I called through the window "Is that what you wanted to know?" referring to our journey across as a reference point for them. Luckily they too had an 'off' sense of humour.

The roads had seemed to dry up a little over the past few days so we made better time reaching Mt Dare. We were confronted by the same mud and water but this time had the confidence to go straight through. To the Mt Dare staff the trailer bearing was just a routine problem, and quickly we were on our way again with new bearings fitted to the hub. I said this was just a routine problem for them – to us they were a lifesaver. To the Scott family, proprietors of the Mt Dare Hotel, and their staff, we are very grateful for your cheerfulness and for not treating travellers in need as unprepared amateurs, which we must have seemed to them. You are a credit to the people of the outback.

We returned to Eringa, fitted the hub with its new bearings and were ready to go. Just in time for dinner, with a bottle of red.

## **Sunday 11 September - Eringa to Coober Pedy**

Having lost another day it was time to consider the maps and Plan D. We realised that we could not include a visit to Peake nor the Oodnadatta Track. We could just manage a quick trip via the Painted Desert provided we camped by the side of the road and then returned home on the boring blacktop. Okay, so that was it. But Murphy had not quite finished with us. When we reached Oodnadatta we discovered that the Painted Desert road was closed. So cutting our losses we headed for Coober Pedy, planning to spend the night somewhere along the road. Again, Murphy had a chuckle. This road to Coober Pedy is one of the most barren I have come across.





*The monotony of the road from Oodnadatta to Coober Pedy.*

Half way down it with dusk approaching, we found a possible campsite on a creek bed with some gidgee trees around it. Not an ideal spot but sufficient for our purpose. We drove off the road and got out of our cars to look at the site. We were immediately attacked by all the mosquitoes from the surrounding aforementioned thousand miles. I have never seen so many. As our friend sleeps in the open we had to move on. Plan E. As the countryside between that creek and Coober Pedy looked to be all the same we decided on a dash to Coober Pedy, which we reached just after dark. No mucking about – pizza for dinner, with a bottle of red.

## **Monday 12 September – Coober Pedy to Woomera**

In the morning it seems almost unnecessary to say there was another hiccup. Normal vehicle checks revealed a broken fan belt. So being past the stage of being alarmed it was just a matter of fitting a new one. Except, the spanner broke. Luckily it was a Monday morning in a well-supplied outback town. Having finally bought a new spanner, replaced the fan belt, and set the tyres to highway pressure, we were on the road to Woomera, our next planned stop. Strangely, there were no incidents worth reporting that day. We found the campsite I remembered from a previous visit, about 50km south of Woomera. Lit a fire, and had a small libation before dinner. Then it started to rain.

This time I was prepared. Rain had been threatening and being aware that our friend's reaction to rain was to retire to the vehicle and spend the night sitting up, I had brought a tarpaulin to make a shelter. This done, we enjoyed a peaceful night. The last in the open.





## Tuesday 13 September – Woomera to Laura

Deadlines were now upon us and we had to be home the next day.

After packing up a wet tent, we planned to have lunch in Port Augusta then a quick visit to Wilmington before a night in the caravan park at Laura. But naturally, the rain had caused a landslide on the Horrocks Highway, so we had to go via Quorn (does that qualify as Plan F?), which was no hardship as it's a very picturesque township.



*As we reminisce on the outback this is where the mind went. Track in this condition.*

We had dodged the rain before venturing into the outback, survived the mud and 'open' roads full of water, and were now on the black top. And Hughie decided to "send [her] down". We drove from Wilmington through Wirrabara and on to Jamestown, Spalding, and Clare. We only just made it. In a couple of places the water was over the roads and the next day they were cut. We were lucky to get through. During the next week there were floods all over South Australia. We had the feeling of not being hounded out of the outback, but of being looked after!

This book on Ted Coulson will be a good one.

Our final night on the road, but not in the bush, was in Laura. Laura is a pretty town worth a separate visit. An excellent dinner of Swedish meatballs with couscous and vegetables, with another excellent bottle of red.

## Wednesday 14 September – Laura to Home!

On to Jamestown and a very good little bakery for a coffee and pasty, before finally saying goodbye to our friend and heading for home.

And when we got home this was the drama presented to us.





*Our placid little Fourth Creek trickle now a raging river.*

This was a memorable trip. Starting with Plan A, we finished with Plan E which could well have been further down the alphabet. Looking back the only things that didn't go wrong were our personal health, food, water, and fuel supplies. Two things stood out on this trip. Communications and maps. We had satellite phones for long distance calls, UHF for convoy comms, and AM car radios to listen to ABC Country Radio – 639MHz in SA – which has excellent regional weather reports.

And maps. I try never to travel without detailed, up-to-date maps. Without maps on this trip we would have been paddleless up that creek. Literally. Maps allowed us to plan alternative routes, and achieve our main objective at least. Without a map we could have been stuck at Leigh Creek.

**A quick map update:** The map I had showed you in the [first post of this series](#) shows a road direct from Abminga to Bloods Creek. It no longer exists. We spent a long time looking for it. It was recently bulldozed out of existence, no reason given. What's the opposite of the old saying "if a road appears when and where you expect it to, don't assume it's the right road".

***Got any interesting outback stories to share? Perhaps you got as far as a Plan Z in yours? Share in the comments below.***