

Storage Drawers in the Back of your 4WD

When I bought the Challenger one add-on that I definitely wanted was a set of drawers in the back – yeah, yeah and a bull-bar at the front but that’s another long and sad tale. Having seen friends with such drawers I saw the real advantage of installing them – ability to access a ‘layer’ of kit that would otherwise be buried under all the gear loaded into the back seemed a no-brainer. You can see why so many kitchen upgrades have gone drawers to replace cupboards.

A short period of thinking of how I might go about doing it myself was cut short when I chanced upon

<http://www.drifta.com.au/4wd-drawers/>

manufactured here in Australia by a small company in Gloucester near the Barrington Tops NSW.

The drawers were a good price and purchasing them would result in a more professional job than non-handyman yours truly. A chat to Mark Beech at DRIFTA and I was convinced that these would work with the Challenger. A major concern had been that the Challenger mounts its spare wheel underneath the body but lowered by a crank nut accessed from a small window in the luggage deck (and not cranked from the back of the vehicle like the Triton). Mark explained that the drawers had a cutout to access the crank nut – you have to fully remove one drawer and fully open the other and you operate the crank with a ratchet/socket wrench.

As I said, the price seemed modest – even with the ‘bed base extension’ that I mentioned in our Feb 2015 newsletter and a few odds and ends plus shipping the full kit came in under \$2000. The items were shipped after a relatively short lead time. Getting it out of the transport packaging was about the hardest bit to the install. Just a matter of lifting the carcass into the back of the car and attaching turnbuckles onto the Challenger’s standard tiedown points. These points aren’t perfectly located for the drawers – I found after a week or so that the drawers had shifted a centimetre or so forward – but a little piece of wood packing in the front tiedowns soon sorted that. Even my awkward handyman skills were sufficient to tailor the bed base extension legs to the correct length – the BBE comprises two panels that hook onto the front of the drawers to provide an extended flat surface up to the folded down rear seats. This gives ‘almost enough’ length for me to lie out in – no chance for those oversized dudes like Greg or Alan! I am thinking that for any extended time, there would be merit in removing the rear seats entirely and having a longer bed base extension as this would give me something like an additional 40cm of bed length. Subsequent to my buying the shorter BBE (makes for easier installation since folding the seats is easy/removing a bit of a pain), Mark reminded me that at the same price I could have bought the longer version designed for rear seat having been removed.

The drawers themselves slide out nice and smooth and provide prodigious volume – albeit I’ve now filled it with gear for camping, recovery, fishing and first aid/fire extinguisher. Glenys’ hope for a ‘grocery drawer’ is on the back burner for the moment. The top surface is a very high quality black carpet. I’ve found it very easy to sweep or vacuum (can’t say the same about some car carpets!). The other add-ons I went for were four spring-loaded tie down points (not designed for ratchet straps but will be OK for gentle bungy net to stop things wandering around) and a checkerboard strip to provide protection to the top edge of the drawer carcass.



A big bonus is the pull-out table that slides out from above the left hand drawer (makes this drawer slightly shallower than the right one). This is stable enough to partially withdraw and use at the rear of the vehicle, but comes out fully with fold out legs to allow it to stand alone. Indeed I've used it in both modes including when there were insufficient tables at the fin-clipping. The other bonus is that the space between the drawers and the rear seats (accessible by tilting the rear seat) provides a nice hideyhole for a 4 piece fly rod and my short 2 piece spinning rod – even better than I had had with the Forester, never again to arrive somewhere without a fishing rod.

So what would I change Possibly only to get the longer BBE to cater for rear seats folded as well as rear seats removed. Very much a satisfied customer.

Bill B