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Photo by Peter Bellis

From the President



We have been strategic partners with Parks Victoria for more than four decades and worked together in Parks Victoria's workplace. It is clear workplaces have changed in those four decades. Looking at our own workplaces where we have been employee or employer, change has required us to work differently and comply with change, for our protection.

Four-wheel drive club members love volunteering. It takes us to places we may not otherwise get to if we were not helping our friends the Parks Victoria rangers. We are able to keep building our relationships with rangers and other Parks Victoria staff whom we work alongside of as we volunteer. We would all remember those rewarding and beneficial times we have had when volunteering, as we observed the smile on the faces of our friends from Parks Victoria. They had been able to get help with some maintenance or reconstruction work which may otherwise not have been possible, without the willing help of FWDV volunteers. Please, never stop volunteering with Parks Victoria.

Right now, it's disappointing to hear there is concern being expressed about change and what we as volunteers are now required to do. Four-wheel drivers are nothing if not resilient, so let's grasp the nettle, connect with the changes and most important of all – keep volunteering. I understand the concern, because there is change occurring, but please spare a thought for our Parks Victoria friends and the changes they are having to cope with so we can keep volunteering.

All of us were impacted by COVID-19 in 2020 and the changes that brought into our lives. May I suggest we coped with COVID-19; we can cope with the changes being introduced to our volunteering. We like our volunteering, we don't like COVID-19, but we got through it and yes, it's still lurking, but we can deal with it, we're four-wheel drivers.

The Board and CEO are aware of the

changing compliance requirements when we work with Parks Victoria and support these changes because they are about the safety of our volunteers. There are some aspects where FWDV will need to discuss with Parks Victoria what these changes mean for us and how we may work with them. We may even need to have some training. We can however, remain confident our CEO will be doing everything possible to help the necessary changes be introduced as smoothly as possible, so we can keep volunteering.

What is however of utmost importance here, is that we adapt our thinking to accept the compliance changes which protect us and our friends at Parks Victoria, when we are working together. There's no way we want to stop helping our public land managers to look after the places we all enjoy so much.

So, may I ask, please, for people to work with the changes. We will need to go through an induction process when we start our volunteer day with Parks Victoria. We will need to provide documents listing our volunteers. A good way to ease into this would be for each club to appoint a Volunteer Co-ordinator. I've no doubt there are people in your club suited to this role who would be willing to help their club deal with these changes. This would be a really positive thing to do. I feel sure if we took this approach our CEO may be able to arrange some training to help our Volunteer Co-ordinators do their job and thus help all of us to continue volunteering.

Four Wheel Drive Victoria and our affiliated clubs are here to help our land managers with what is a big task. Let's continue helping, by volunteering, a job we do so well and get enjoyment from when we participate.

All the best,

Colin Oates
President

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Illegal trail bike riding and four wheel driving on rise in Victoria

Victoria's parks, forests and reserves have become more popular than ever for trail bike riding and four-wheel driving over the last 12 months, and while there is an extensive network of roads and tracks open to the public, illegal off-road activity is increasing.

The Conservation Regulator has issued more than 100 infringements for off-road vehicle use by trail bike riders and four-wheel-drivers since January 1.

Authorised officers are patrolling key locations across the state, targeting illegal trail bike and four-wheel driving activity, and on the spot fines of \$165 apply. The maximum fine for riding or driving on closed roads is \$3,300, while damaging wildlife habitat can result in a fine of more than \$8,000.



ANZAC Dawn Service in the bush 25th April, 2021



An ANZAC Dawn Service is always a moving event and one which forces us to stop and think about those who volunteered their service and, in many cases, gave their lives during times of war so that we might enjoy the freedom of places like the Victorian High Country.

This year, Land Rover Owners Club of Victoria trip leaders John and Prue Hasler conducted a weekend trip into the High Country over the ANZAC weekend. "As a club first in its 58-year history, I suggested an ANZAC Dawn Service on the Sunday morning of the trip, the 25th of April.



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"Aside from the excellent trip itself, which took in numerous mountain huts, iconic tracks and river crossings, the service was to be a real drawcard event.

At 5:30am club members and families on the trip gathered at a small, temporary memorial in the bush. Flanked by a small grove of trees creating a natural backdrop, the simple memorial was the focus of a brief but moving ANZAC Dawn Service. The evening before, we had invited other campers staying in the vicinity of King Hut to the service. So, some campers from a Vic Wildman 'Great Divide' tour



group attended the service alongside club members.

"Highlights of the service were a retired army Warrant Officer reading the Ode to the Fallen, a female army cadet from Ivanhoe Grammar laying the wreath with her older brother, a cub scout in uniform, a Mopoke owl calling out, Prue talking about her father (a RAAF bomber tail gunner), and bugle calls echoing around the valley.

"Following the service, club members pitched in together as a team to prepare a superb Gunfire Breakfast whilst others got the fire going.



The Dawn Service proved to be a great way of encouraging bonding and comradeship on a club trip whilst also providing a fitting tribute to those who had served."

James Lawson
Land Rover Owners Club of Victoria Inc.

(James Lawson has been an active Army Reservist for over 30 years. He is a Sergeant with the 5th/6th Battalion of the Royal Victoria Regiment, a unit which includes amongst its battle honours the Landing at ANZAC, the Somme, Tobruk, El Alamein and the Kokoda Trail.)



| News

Public land closures across Gippsland



In the wake of the recent storms and flooding in Gippsland, a number of parks, forests and public land areas will be closed across Gippsland and other parts of the state impacted by severe weather.

All state forests within South Gippsland, Baw Baw, Latrobe and Wellington Local Government Areas (LGA's) will be closed until Friday 18 June 2021.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer for Gippsland Geoff Conway said: "As a result of extensive flood, storm and wind damage across Gippsland, we are asking people to please avoid

visiting our national or state parks and forests until declared safe."

"Flood waters, damaging winds and heavy rainfall have caused flash flooding, fallen trees, rock falls, washouts, track scouring, debris and other hazards and we are asking you to remain sensible and exercise greater care until these dangers are cleared."

"Our crews need time to assess the extent of damage across our public land to make sure they are safe for the public to access."

Additionally, other public lands such as rail trails, recreation reserves, four-

wheel-drive tracks, public halls and coastal reserves within these localities will be closed at the discretion of the land managers.

- For a full list of park and forest closures, visit:
<https://www.ffm.vic.gov.au/permits-and-regulations/closures-of-parks-and-forests>

- For a full list of road closures, visit:
<https://traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au>

- Keep up to date with the latest emergency notifications via the VicEmergency app and website:
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The Great Outdoor and 4X4

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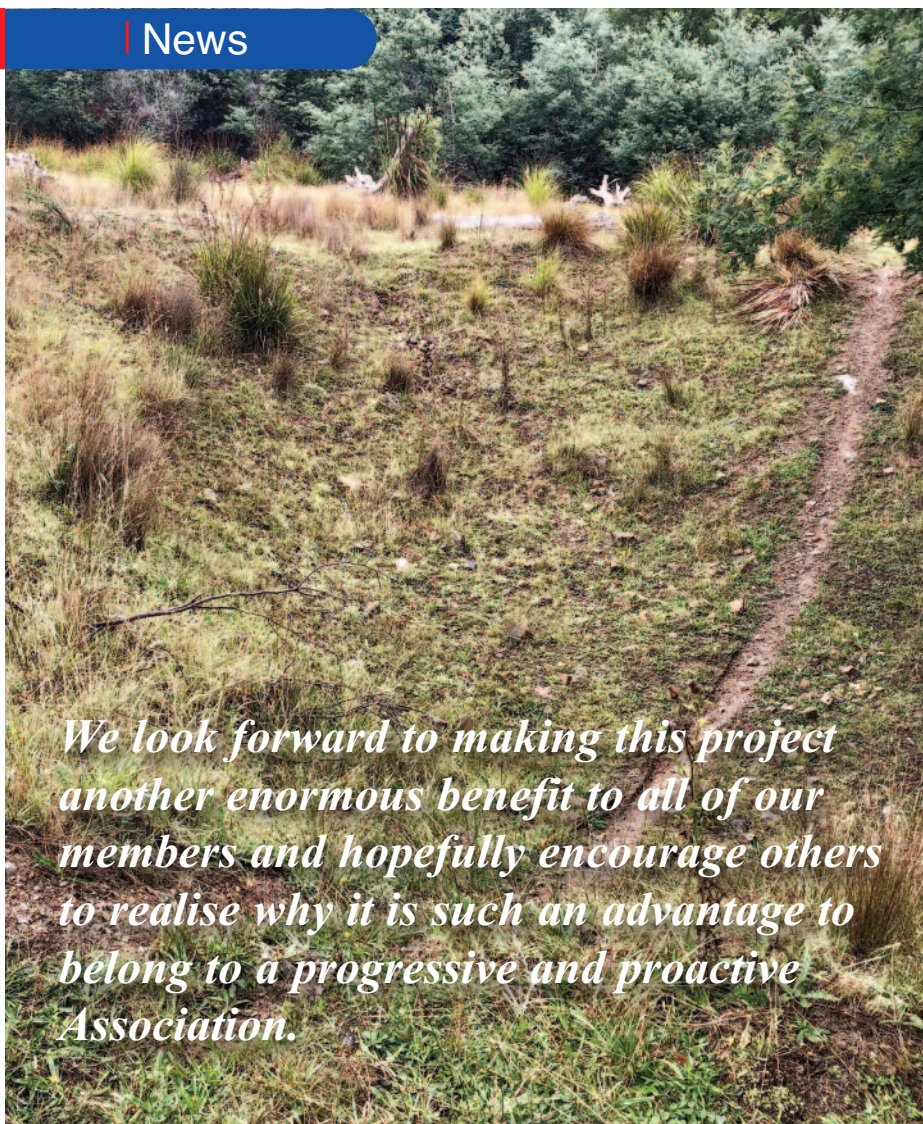
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The Great Outdoor and 4X4 Expos 2021

Yarra Glen - October 28 - 31 | Gippsland (Sale) - November 26 - 28



We look forward to making this project another enormous benefit to all of our members and hopefully encourage others to realise why it is such an advantage to belong to a progressive and proactive Association.

Toolangi - FWDV Training Centre

It is with great delight that I can advise you that we have been successful in acquiring a license to operate a training facility on a disused quarry abutting the Toolangi Forest on the Melba Highway, Crown Allotment 10B, Parish of Woodbourne. (North of the existing Castella Quarry just past and to the East of Gordon's Bridge Road)

This achievement is the result of 2 years work which started in February 2019 when Andrew Collard DELWP Forest & Fire Officer, invited us to a meeting at Toolangi to discuss track management issues. Upon finding this unused site we embarked upon a mission of acquisition which required immeasurable help from some very important and valued colleagues and friends. Numerous meetings ensued with the DELWP staff and Murrindindi Shire, followed by countless telephone conversations sorting through the various ramifications involving fire management overlay plans, Vic Road



approvals and the overall planning and environmental requirements to

satisfy all parties concerned. Having been granted a 10-year license with further options, we have a chance to build a training facility which will not only service our RTO's training requirements but also give our Association clubs and members a place to conduct training in their own right.

Securing the property is our first priority with the need for installation of gates and padlocks to keep out those who have been using the area as a dumping ground for commercial and household rubbish. Unfortunately, there is a lot of removal work to be done in this regard and the call will go out to foster assistance in this endeavour shortly.

We have already established public liability insurance for this property and will undertake a risk management policy in the very near future once we establish the design of the entire area. We will seek the help of those with knowledge in this construction process to bring about an effective plan along with the guidance of the local DELWP land managers, making sure we do not contravene any parameters of the license.

I would like to sincerely thank the following people for their time and assistance in bringing about this wonderful opportunity: Andrew Collard, Toolangi Forest & Fire Officer Sara Crute, Director Land Management Policy Division DELWP, Kerry Henningsen, Project Officer Land Administration DELWP, Kathy Richardson, Program Manager Planning and Approvals Land and Built Environment, Hume Region DELWP, Luke Rogan, Program Manager, Land & Build Environment Hume Region DELWP, Kathryn Hamono, Program Officer Hume Region DELWP, Rowan Overwater, Land & Build Environment Hume Region DELWP, Carmel O'Dwyer, Planning & Approvals program Officer DELWP and Clara Gartland, Planning Officer Murrindindi Shire Council.

We look forward to making this project another enormous benefit to all of our members and hopefully encourage others to realise why it is such an advantage to belong to a progressive and proactive Association.

Regards,

Wayne Hevey
CEO

Four Wheel Drive Victoria



LROCV

FWDV CHAINSAW OPERATORS COURSE - MARCH 2021

For those who have yet to be smitten with the desire to wield a chainsaw and for all members interested in improving your safe operation of a chainsaw, I for one, would recommend you book into the next course offered.

The course is delivered by our friends and capable trainers from FWDV - Wayne, Greg and Ian. We were lucky to have such a good crew who made the three days enjoyable, action-packed and above all, safe.

In addition to the members from LROCV, we had a couple of participants who came through FWDV (the names of whom I did not record, sorry). Members who participated were, Peter, Stuart, Troy, Dali, Bill and Tom. Many thanks to John for rounding us up and making sure we got there. Thanks also to Fred for hosting the event on his lovely property.

Day 1

We all arrived on Friday evening to a windy welcome. Tents, vans and swags were quickly sorted. We were very lucky to have the lee of the shed to pitch our tents, as Drouin seemed to be the windiest spot in Victoria for the entire three days.

Once everyone was accounted for, we were quickly settled into our rustic lecture room and the fun started. Safety comes first and we quickly learnt how to remove and reattach the chain to our soon-to-be best mate, the humble chain saw. I personally enjoyed learning how to appropriately maintain a saw as well as the safest way to start, operate, stop and maintain a saw. As was to be reinforced throughout the course safety comes first and everyone was well-equipped with chaps, head, ear and eye protection as well as steel capped boots and appropriate gloves. All essential safety gear. I trust all of you using saws are

kitted out with in-date gear.

Following our briefing session we fired up the BBQ for a well-earned dinner and our first night of wind-blown sleep. One of our members who had chosen to sleep in their car found the rocking and shaking to be too much to bear and resolved to sleep at home for the remainder of the course.

Day 2

Up early to more wind and off to the Drouin Forest - Fred's back paddock. The Maintenance Station was quickly set up and daily inspection commenced. A check of personal safety equipment was undertaken before we watched a demonstration of correct cutting techniques and then went on to practice.

Constant reminders about safe chainsaw handling, ear protection, etc. ensued and we all felt safe and built our confidence in how to safely operate our machines. Interspersed with "good and proper" grip and stance were instructions and practice

on how to sharpen chains. Following clean up, refuelling and a general debrief, it was back to camp. Refreshing beverages, good conversation and dinner was followed by a sound sleep.

Highlights of the night included the 'over fire' cooking skills of Billy, whose reputation as a bush chef were established.

Day 3

Despite the threat of rain, day three was another successful session of wood cutting and furniture making. We consolidated our skills, reinforced the importance of safe operations, and plunge cut, reduced, scarfed and ripped our way through a tonne of wood. We established safe emergency routes, sharpened chains, hammered in wedges and had an all-round good day.

Final thanks to Fred, our instructors and John Coupe and a special thanks to Alison McLaughlin from 4WDVIC for getting us set up. Thanks also to the Club for subsidising the event.

By the way, everyone was assessed as competent and we look forward to participating in the many track clearing outings organised by the Club.

Tom Hadkiss





Camp Host

AT WYPERFELD NATIONAL PARK WONGA CAMP GROUND VICTORIA

We left Traralgon in Gippsland mid morning on a sunny Wednesday with our 9m off road van in tow for a two day trip to Wyperfeld National Park Wonga camp ground in north west Victoria. With our Camp Host box from FWDV which has been in our storeroom for 12 months due to the Covid-19 lockdowns, and our club's sandwich board, in the back of our Land Rover Discovery 4 we were well prepared for our duty as Camp Hosts.

The passage through the city was without incident even with some heavy traffic before the Bolte bridge due to break downs (by others). Our first stop was at the Ravenswood Rest Area on the M79 for lunch where we planned our night stop which worked out to be at Donald Apex Park, by the Loddon River. After setting up and meeting our fellow campers we headed into town for a cold drink, some more supplies, and to check out the historic old police camp lockup. Donald is a very friendly town.

After a quiet night we headed off to meet the rangers at PV Rainbow depot. Hamish was our point of contact for the camp hosting and after introductions we headed off to the Wonga campground where Hamish

let us set up in a privileged area right next to the camp shelter where we would set up our hosting point. Before heading out to Wonga we stopped at the local bakery for the customary curry pie and ice coffee. The curry pie rated high on the pie register.

For those who have not been to the Wonga campground, it's got to be one of the best sites in a National Park we have been in. Each site can easily hold 3 large vans around a fire pit and table and chairs. The 3 drop toilets are also a cut above the average with lights, fans and wash basin with water. It's a credit to PV, the local rangers who attended daily and the friends of the park who help keep it all in great condition.



After setting up the information sheets and the FWDV information packs on a table (supplied by Hamish) in the camp shelter, and a thorough briefing on the park and the surroundings, we were ready to help the campers enjoy the park. Hamish left us with a radio and First Aid kit 'just in case', and provided a load of wood for use by all. Our role was to provide information and be a point of contact - not to act as 'police'.

The road into the park is sealed and there is a dirt ring road suitable for two wheel drives which allows non 4x4 drivers to access some local walks and see the typical Malley district terrain. The Wonga campground offers 4 interesting walks ranging from 1.5 to 8km and several lookouts. One lookout in particular was well attended at sunset, with many campers taking a drink and nibbles to watch the sunset - which we can say is a great way to end the day. It is also one of the few spots where your phone will work if you're on the Telstra network; the park does have Optus coverage.

For those with 4x4 and higher clearance, there are some great sand driving tracks to venture on to. The 57km sand track to Snowdrift is a good day drive to experience sand driving without too much risk of getting stuck so long as you drop the tyre pressures, and don't stop on an upward slope of one of the several small inclines. Low range was not required. It takes about 2 hours to get to Snowdrift, and if the drive does not meet your expectations the exercise of climbing and sliding down the beautiful white sand dune makes it all worthwhile. Other sand tracks can be found around Lake Albacutya only ½ an hour away.

During our stay we were able to have a campfire each night and with no other lights for kilometres we were blessed with a night sky that can only be seen from such an outback location. While the wildlife birds were not plentiful this was because water



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was in short supply and Hamish recommended a return in October/September when the flowers are in bloom and vegetation growth is abundant.

During our stay we enjoyed over 100 interactions and had multiple conversations with campers seeking clarification on things to do and places to go. We were also able to direct families with children to Kelly, a local ranger holding junior ranger programs in the visitor's centre. Kelly is a great communicator, and the program provided some interesting (funny)

answers to questions like "what feral animals can be found in the park?" Apparently, some animals can drive cars. The park was full by the evening of Easter Saturday, but we still felt like we were alone. As the numbers dropped over the next few days our need to host reduced and we were able to do the walks and drives I mentioned earlier which improved our ability to relate to camper information requests. With Hamish and Kelly checking in each day and sharing their experiences with us we felt very comfortable in our role.

On Easter Tuesday we packed up our campsite and cleaned up the hosting material and headed back to Rainbow to meet with Hamish for a debrief, vanilla slice and coffee. Hamish is a great guy and typical of the rangers working for PV who are passionate about their work.

We again broke up our trip home

with a stop at Happy Jack's Natural Reserve free camp, at Lockwood on road A790. It does experience heavy truck traffic so the noise is quite high and while there is plenty of flat ground, we would not recommend it if sound sleep is a priority. The next morning, we headed home via the FWDV office in Mitcham to drop off our Camp Host box. Parking a 9m van in a city street is not easy, so we double parked while Wayne ran out and picked up the box. Thank you, Wayne, that certainly reduced the stress. We arrived home around 1pm with plenty of time to clean out the van before happy hour once again beckoned.

With the interactions and adventures we experienced over the week, we can confidently recommend camp hosting and look forward to our next adventure out there somewhere.

Tonee & Alan

Don Little 4WD Farewell

The friendship with Land Rovers began with a "Fire-engine red" Discovery. Flowers and a bottle of wine complemented the sale. The car was good, but the friendships developed from that purchase were lifelong.

The association with the Land Rover Owners Club of Gippsland allowed Don to understand what the Land Rover was capable of. Over the next twenty years, Shirl and Don joined the team to exciting places. Discovering our own backyard – Gippsland, and the wonders that were on offer.

Ron Cook led the first trip into the Gippsland wilderness. Greg Rose led them down the path, literally, down Billy Goat Bluff Track. Taking in the breathtaking views across the valleys from lookouts, trig points and ridges.

A memorable trip was run by Stephen Dempsey in January 2000. The usual clearing of No.21 track with handsaw to clear fallen trees to Mitchell's flat. We developed a respect for the road drain "whoops", that would catch the sliding car in slippery conditions when clay roads turned to slides. The party explored The Howqua Hills track, Tunnel Bend and the old-world charms of Fry's Hut, Upper Jamison Hut and the Howqua Valley splendors. The exciting days coming to an end listening to yarns around the campfires at night.

In March that year was Don's first Blue Rag Range trip into the roof of



Victoria. The wildflowers were prolific that year. A carpet of color across the alps. Don and Shirl enjoyed three Blue Rag Range trips with the last one being a Gastronomist delight. Don tried food combinations he'd never eaten before.

The trio of good food, good company and great locations always prevail with this 4WD club. A memorable early trip to the Omeo region at the Blue Duck Inn still brings a smile to Shirl's face as they shared a room with Dot and Ron Prince. Ron suggested to Don and Shirl to take the double bed and Dot and Ron take the bunk beds as he was "Younger than Don". Ron jumped on the top bunk. This relationship blossomed into a deep and lasting friendship between the couples that Shirl and Don cherished.

The membership to the LROC-Gippsland allowed friends to meet in different corners of Australia. Don and Shirl joined Alan McCrae, Ian Blake and his son Stephen to Blinman,



South Australia for the Land Rover Jamboree one year. Poor Stephen had to put up with "4 snorers" according to Shirl. The Cooma Land Rover celebrations eluded them with the Discovery breaking down one year near Cann River.

There were many other memorable trips. The Deddick trail, Little River camps which we nicknamed: "Fly Central" due to the mass of flies that joined us for roast pork one evening. The Christmas and Melbourne Cup weekends scattered across Victoria, and beyond. Travels to Colac Colac, Mallacoota, Walkerville, Little Annie, where the largest hamburgers were devoured. A weekend at Buchan Caves that turned out to be one continuous coffee, cake and talk days. Many cuppa's and yarns were spent around fires, pub tables and along the water's edge. All trips were fondly remembered, there was never a trip that Don said he didn't enjoy.

Don will be missed from the fireside, the level-headed talker at meetings and his quiet strength he presented to those around him.

Farewell, Don.



Toyota Land Cruiser Club of Victoria

Jericho Historic Sites Working Bee

29th - 31st March, 2021

Eamon, Bill, Slawko & Rebecca, Tony & Barb, Michael, Anne & Bob, Trajco, Alan and John.

What a wonderful bunch of volunteers I had for 3 days, who cleaned up the sites with a heap of enthusiasm and good hard work.

Monday is our 'get to the campsite' day and I come in via the Marysville to Woods Point road, but when I reached the junction where the Warburton to Woods Point road meets the Marysville to Woods Point road, there was a Road Closed sign across it and a very bored man making sure no one turned down the road to Warburton.

Hmmm, looks like the crew coming up that way would be enjoying a lovely detour via the Acheron Way to get to Marysville and then on to the Woods Point road and indeed that's what happened. Eamonn, Michael, Alan, Anne & Bob and Rebecca & Slawko all had to detour via Marysville, adding a couple of extra hours to their travel time.

Everyone eventually rocked into our camp and after setting up their campsites enjoyed a well-deserved happy hour and evening around the fire. Clear skies and full moon made it a very cool evening but an enjoyable one.

Tuesday morning was a glorious DRY and sunny day, and saw us heading down the Jericho track to our first site of the day, the Old Oak Tree, to be greeted by Trajco who only came up for the day and arrived ahead of us.

We had got permission to use some of our Yarck equipment and Eamonn had kindly brought a Deutcher lawn mower, a whipper snipper and a brush cutter up in his trailer. The chaps proceeded to get the Deutcher working at the Old Oak Tree site whilst the rest of us proceeded to the Cemetery. When they had finished the Old Oak Tree site it looked immaculate.

The Jericho cemetery wasn't too bad from where we had cut it on our last wet November session, but the area

we hadn't done back then was waist high and that was a good 2 thirds of the cemetery. Slawko and Rebecca did their magic on the Dilworth and Ferguson graves and the cemetery gate, which came up like it had just been painted.

The team with whipper snippers and brush cutters went to town on it. The Deutcher made its mark on a fair bit



of the cemetery and the end result was truly magnificent. I hadn't seen the cemetery look this good for a few years, absolutely spectacular. All of us were chuffed with the result.

Barb and I meanwhile were cleaning all the historical information signage and the ground cover beneath and around them. Thank God Barb had a green scourer with her as these signs were not only filthy but had black spots embedded in them too. I was also assessing these sites for the requirements the team would need to apply for the afternoon clean up.

Earlier in the month, Alison McLaughlin from FWDV had asked me to call Ross Boreham from the Bairnsdale 4WD club as he was interested in the Jericho region.

I contacted Ross and it turns out he is a living relative of Charles Ferguson, our one and only grave with a headstone and an ornate wire fence around it. I sent him some info about his Jericho ancestor and told him about our working bee. Well, he rocked up Tuesday around lunch time with his brush cutter and swag and helped us to clean up the cemetery and the other sites for the afternoon. Ross wants to come along on our next working bee too. He's a good worker and very welcome.

Around 2:30pm the cemetery was completed and looking sensational, and a few of our team had to get back home on the Tuesday, Rebecca & Slawko, John and Trajco headed home and the rest of us went on over to clean up the Jericho Diversion Tunnel. Luckily Eamonn had his chainsaw with him and made short work of a big tree that had fallen across the picnic/beach access area where you can go for a swim in the Jordan River and check out a better view of the tunnel.



On to Chinamen's Point and many hands make quick work, so getting the walking track down to the info sign and the ceremonial oven cleared was done in no time.

You have no idea how bad the blackberry bush has taken over the whole area, it's really sad and I wish DELWP would do some spraying. Eventually the roads will disappear under it.

We headed back to our campsite via Red Jacket and took a look at those sites, and for the first time I can remember, the post office site was completely free of blackberry bushes and bracken and you could get down and walk over the area. It even has a mine shaft you could view and peer down. The site looked great.

We headed up the RJ Spur track to get back to the Jericho track. This is a pretty track and goes along the ridge line most of the way with lovely views on both sides.

Our next adventure was to rediscover



the Bren Gun carrier relic somewhere at the top of the Jericho track. Eamonn, Tony, Barb and I had seen it years ago, when Noel a now retired DELWP ranger had shown us where it was. Eamonn had the co-ordinates and he and Michael were checking them off as we got nearer to it, and I remembered that Noel had said there's a huge tree stump on the track and the gun was up in the brush opposite. Well, we found the tree stump, which aligned with the co-ordinates and Voila!



Jericho Cemetery

The old mining townships of Jericho and Red Jacket are located off an unmade side road from the Woods Point to Matlock to Abelfeldy road.

The cemetery is found on a hillside about 400 metres from the picnic area at the Jordan River crossing.

The Jericho Cemetery was gazetted in 1870 and officially closed in 1983. It is known that there were earlier burials before 1870, with burial records believed to have been destroyed in a 1939 Gippsland bushfire.

In July, 1983 the Health Commission of Victoria was advised by the MMBW (Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works) that the entire Red Jacket and Jericho Cemeteries as well as a portion of the Aberfeldy Cemetery were located in the Board's Thomson River Dam Catchment Area and requested that these three cemeteries be closed in order to preserve and maintain the water quality of the streams in the Region. This request was refused and the status of these cemetery reserves were retained.

Following negotiations the MMBW accepted the trusteeship of the Red Jacket and Jericho Cemeteries for maintenance purposes and the Health Commission agreed to close these two cemeteries to all further burials and limit burials at the Aberfeldy Cemetery to that portion of the cemetery reserves that lies outside the Catchment area.

The one remaining headstone left intact in the Jericho Cemetery is that of Charles Ferguson. "In memory of Charles Ferguson died 24th Feb 1868 aged 42 years".

The actual number of burials in the cemetery are unknown.

For several years the Toyota Land Cruiser Club of Victoria, under the guidance of Dulcie Watts has undertaken significant preservation works on this and other nearby historical sites. The Club keeps the black-berries at bay, maintains the Jericho cemetery grounds, trims the grass and looks after the signage amongst many other tasks.





We stopped and found the track up to the Bren gun and the mine shaft nearby. Photos were taken and off we headed back to camp.

Another night of great clear skies and a full moon and wonderful conversation around the fire.

We were a tired bunch heading off to bed around 10:00pm-ish.

Wednesday dawned lovely and sunny, a great day for exploring. Bill decided to stay back at camp to rearrange his Land Cruiser and repack it the way it should be. Meanwhile the rest of us headed down to the Leviathan track to see the old relics and try and find the mine that Mark, Gary and Neil had discovered back in February 20.

We explored the old boiler and other relics lying around in the blackberries, and picked leeches off each other. Then we started to try and find this mine, but over the last year a couple of large trees had fallen over and a heap of new growth had sprung up,



and we couldn't identify a pathway to the mine. We could see a flattened area below but no easy way to it. The whole area needs a clean-up. We were all a bit disappointed but it was a great morning anyway, and we headed back to camp to have lunch and pack up for the drive home.

Thank you all very much. Your good humour, wonderful company and fantastic work was truly appreciated.

Dulcie Watts

Toyota Land Cruiser Club of Victoria



TRACKWATCH

NEWS & VIEWS OF THE VICTORIA ASSOCIATION OF FOUR WHEEL DRIVE CLUBS

THOMSON CLEAN-UP

Forty kilometres of track are now clear for use by Victorian four wheelers in the Thomson Catchment area. Closed since 1970, these tracks were cleared and opened by members of the Victoria Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs as a major community service.

On the 30 November, over 280 members descended on the Thomson Catchment Area where clubs and members were allocated specific tracks and clear-up tasks.

Over 100 vehicles, 63 chainsaws, 32 brushcutters and lots of enthusiasm saw the 50 sq mile catchment thoroughly examined and cleared by the members. The majority of fire access tracks were cleared, track maintenance undertaken and future tasks earmarked for further attention.

For further attention, three cemeteries were also tackled with blackberries and undergrowth cleared from historic sites at Jericho, Red Jacket and Aberfeldy. The New Chum Mine site was cleared of trees, which had taken root through the top of historic kilns. The kilns are over 100 years old and of special significance in the history of gold exploration in Gippsland.

The Hon Robert Lawson MLC of the Natural Resources and Environment Committee toured the restoration works and paid high compliment to the work of the Association.

The Shire of Narracan also sent congratulations to the work of the Clubs.

The weekend clean up was coordinated by Association vice-president John Cribbes who did a fantastic job in bringing together the number of Clubs and private assistance from several major companies. Great job John!

THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING -

Surrey Petroleum Pty Ltd for donation of two stroke fuel.
Surrey Petroleum Parragon JBA for supplying air transport.
Just Communications Pty Ltd - supplying base and communications for the entire area.
Public Trustee of Victoria - printing.
Jack Australia! - publicity.
Herald & Weekly Times - publicity.
Regional TV stations - publicity.
John Wilkinson - Video Tape coordination and production.
Jeff Laws, Latrobe Valley FJRC and ALL of the Clubs and their members that attended.

THIRD MELBOURNE OFF-ROAD SHOW

The third Melbourne 4 and 200 off-road show was recently staged. The Association Show was recently staged. The Association Show was recently staged. The Association Show was recently staged.

The Largest Single 4WD Club Working Bee in Australia?

As told to Prue Hasler by the late John Cribbes

Has there been a weekend event where 300 4WD club members worked on one project in the one area?

In the early 1970's there was a drought and the current water storages were inadequate. The decision was made to build the Thomson Dam, which would take 15 years to accomplish. In about 1978 the Jordan Valley was closed to the public - this was to protect the water catchment as water was being diverted from the Jordan River at Swinger into the Thomson Yarra Tunnel - as an interim measure to boost Melbourne's water supply until the Thomson Dam was completed.

Over 30 years ago the late John Cribbes was a member of the Land Rover Owners Club of Victoria (LROCV), and knew many of the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW - now Melbourne Water) Rangers in the closed catchment. In March 1983 John applied for permission to take a party of LROCV members along B.B. -

Jordan Divide Track to Red Jacket and Violet Town Spur Track to examine historical gold mining artefacts. This permission was granted subject to a Ranger being at the front and the rear of the convoy.

On the way in the Ranger at the rear was delayed at Matlock and followed the convoy in a short while later. When he caught up with the group having lunch at Jericho, he expressed disbelief that 20 vehicles had travelled along the tracks with so little evidence.

Late in 1984 John started lobbying the MMBW to reopen the tracks in the Thomson catchment which had not had any traffic in the previous seven years. John was given permission to organise 4WD Clubs to undertake the cleanup.

With the assistance of the Victorian Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs (now Four Wheel Drive Victoria) and John Hasler's detailed solo survey of all the tracks on foot and bicycle over approximately

As reported in Trackwatch December 1985

"Forty kilometres of track are now clear for use by Victorian four wheelers in the Thomson Catchment area. Closed since 1970 these tracks were cleared and opened by members of the Victoria Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs as a major community service.

On the 30th November, 1985 over 280 members descended on the Thomson Catchment area where clubs and members were allocated specific tracks and cleanup tasks.

Over 100 vehicles, 63 chainsaws, 32 brushcutters and lots of enthusiasm saw the 50 sq mile catchment thoroughly examined and cleared by the members. The majority of fire access tracks were cleared, track maintenance undertaken and future tasks earmarked for further attention.

Three cemeteries were also tackled with blackberries and undergrowth cleared from historic sites at Jericho, Red Jacket and Aberfeldy. The New Chum Mine site was cleared of trees, which had taken root through the top of historic kilns. The kilns are over 100 years old and of special significance in the history of gold exploration in Gippsland.

The Hon. Robert Lawson MLC of the Natural Resources & Environment Committee toured the restoration works and paid high compliment to the work of the Association.

The Shire of Narracan also sent congratulations to the work of the Clubs.

The weekend cleanup was co-ordinated by Association vice-president John Cribbes who did a fantastic job in bringing together the number of Clubs and private assistance from several major companies. Great job John!"

Melbourne Herald - Monday December 2nd 1985



Nearly 300 four-wheel drive enthusiasts camped in the Thomson River catchment area after a week

Drivers go bush to clear the v



Brush, logs and blackberries vanished in the big clean-up.

Four-wheel drive enthusiasts want to dispel any suggestion they are bush-bashers.

"We use the environment for recreation," said the vice-president of the Victoria Association of Four-Wheel Drive Clubs, Mr John Cribbes.

About 280 association members took to the bush in the Thomson River catchment area at the weekend to carry out some much-needed clearing work as well as giving their public image a boost.

All but a small section of the catchment area, 100 km east of Melbourne, has been closed to the public since 1970 according to Mr Cribbes.

fifteen weekend visits, planning commenced.

After two years of planning, the track clearing and rubbish cleanup took place on the last weekend of November in 1985. With the track conditions supplied by John Hasler, each club was allocated tasks suited to their abilities. Base camp was set up at Muttontown, on the eastern side of Matlock. Thirty 4WD clubs attended the event whilst other clubs living further away organised bush clean ups in their own areas.

The 300 club members who attended the Thomson event supplied their own equipment (no funding was supplied) and carried out many tasks including, clearing of timber and vegetation from tracks with chainsaws and other implements, slashing and blackberry clearance. Large areas of blackberry infestations had runways cut through to prepare the area for land managers to spray. The Red Jacket Cemetery and Jericho Cemetery were included in the clearing weekend. The area is bounded by the Matlock to Walhalla Road, Warburton to Woods Point Road and the Thomson Valley Road.

So, if you enjoy travelling in this area and exploring the various goldfields and cemeteries – there are 300 4WD Club members from 1985 you need to thank. Also refer to the Herald Sun article on Sunday/Monday 1st or 2nd December, 1985.

(John Cribbes was a founder of the Macalister 4WD Club and co founder of the now disbanded Phoenix Club which concentrated on environmental issues and works).



end of much-needed "trail blazing" ... clearing 40km of fire trails.

Way for new image

Report: GERARD WRIGHT
Pictures: PETER CHARLES

The result was an area choked by blackberries and other undergrowth.

But after two days, using 118 vehicles, 63 chainsaws, 32 brushcutters, one water pump and a "blackberry muncher" later, 40 km of fire trails had been cleared.

The bush is now safe for fire fighters, Mr Crabbs said.

Control of the catchment area will be assumed by the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands.

"They can look after that land properly, there's no excuse for them now," Mr Crabbs said.

The association is now looking for other trails to blaze according to Mr Crabbs – this time under the direction of the Forests department.

"I doubt that we could do more than one big clean up a year," he said.

"It's certainly worthwhile though. I'm feeling a bit of a glow this morning."

All roads in the area will be open to the public throughout the summer.

| Club Spotlight

OFFROAD AND CAMPING CLUB OF VICTORIA

Easter Wimmera and Mallee exploration trip

Lake Albacutya photo by Jean Bellis

This was the shakedown for the Simpson Desert trip the club is running in June/July this year. The group consisted of very experienced members, newer members and members who had little or no sand driving experience.

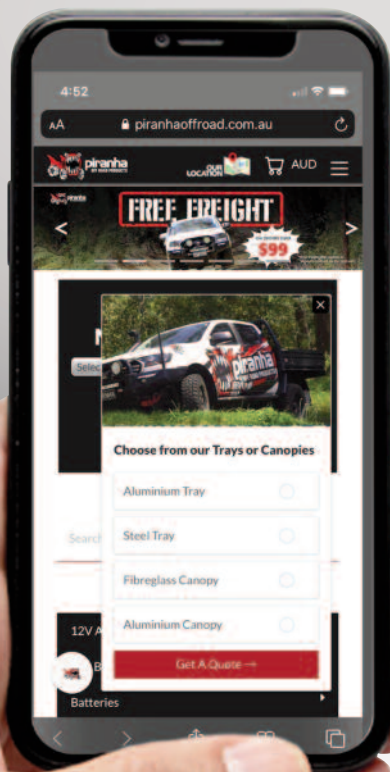
Some of the group had new vehicles and were keen to see how they would perform. We were using this trip as a means of gaining sand driving experience and finding out just what our vehicles could or could not do. The cars on the trip included two Foresters, two Pajeros, a Prado, a Land Cruiser and a FJ Cruiser.

Thursday April 1st: This was our travel day to all meet up at Rainbow by 6:00pm. Everyone took a different route to visit different places of interest or to see family or friends.

We made our way to the local pub, The Eureka, for dinner which was a great way to unwind after a day of travel, have a few laughs and start to come together as a group.

After a long day and with an early start the next morning, most people headed to bed around 9:00pm. Some took a few moments just to stop and take in the brilliance of the night sky.

Friday April 2nd: We were all up early for hot showers and packed by 8:30am. We were treated to a beautiful sunrise. Some of us (the trips leaders) took a bit longer to pack up, but by 9:00am we were ready for a briefing and off we went.



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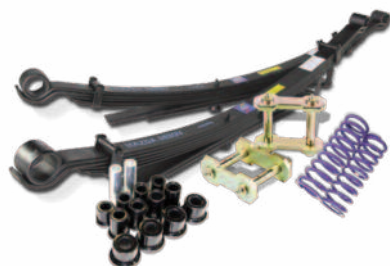
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Border Track by Elaine and Brent McCunn

Lake Albacutya was our first destination for the day. The track went from a firm dirt track to deep sand within seconds and caught us a bit unawares. While some of the convoy was able to stop on firm ground to deflate tyres, some of us could not. Peter made it up the first dune while Paul and Brent stopped in the sand at the bottom to deflate their tyres. Paul made it over, but Brent had become bogged. With some digging he was up and over. Everyone else followed without incident. Other than a few stops for photos, we all made it to the end of the Lake for morning tea under the large shady trees.

We proceeded to Wyperfeld National Park along good gravel roads and then a long section of sealed road to Wonga Campground for lunch. After lunch, the sand was deep and soft and made for some interesting but fun driving. This gave us the opportunity for those with little or no sand driving skills to have a go and learn from the more experienced drivers in the group. There were a few stoppages as some had to have a second go at a dune or were caught in the deep

soft sand and required some digging to get them on their way. We really enjoyed the challenge of the deep sandy tracks.

We made it to Underbool where Peter had arranged with the owner of the local garage to open so we could refuel. We also reinflated our tyres. Lake Crosbie was our stop for the night, and it was busy. Most of us were able to squeeze into a section together, Jeevan, Richard and Paul secured the prime real estate with a lake side position. Camp was set up and the photographers went out for a walk on the lake and took lots of photos as the sun was setting. After dinner we sat around talking and marvelling at the brilliance of the stars and the occasional satellite.

Saturday April 3rd : The sunrise over Lake Crosbie on the second morning revealed pink pastel skies as everyone tried to meet the 9:00am deadline that had been set by the trip leader, who today was determined to be ready before anyone else! He was ready well in advance and waiting to do the daily brief.

Before we set off, we took a short detour to the historic salt mines that could be found on the eastern shore of the lake. There was much to capture the attention of the keen photographers in the group, and an informative notice board for those who wanted to know the history of the area. It was already starting to heat up and the arid landscape illustrated how hard life must have been for the miners here entrusted with bringing the precious white mineral to the local population.

Soon we hit the Mallee Highway and sped towards the border town of Murrayville. For those who spotted it, a highlight was a huge wedge-tailed eagle sitting in a tree. At Murrayville we stopped for morning tea and the coffee starved in the group were able to imbibe their tippie! Soon afterwards we left the bitumen and turned left at an inconspicuous road just prior to the South Australian border. The road followed the Victorian side for the first 16 kilometres and went through a series of gates between paddocks before going through one



Red Bluff Track by Chris Hayward

gate from Victoria and into South Australia. Tyres were deflated at Scorpion Springs and the intrepid party set off on a narrow sandy road that would accompany us for the rest of the day. With 45km to go, mid-afternoon was proving to be a bit optimistic! So proved, as the least experienced in the group (Chris and Jenny) got stuck just a few kilometres into the trip. Graham and Kerry came to the rescue and managed to tow them back down the slope. On the second attempt they managed to get to the summit.

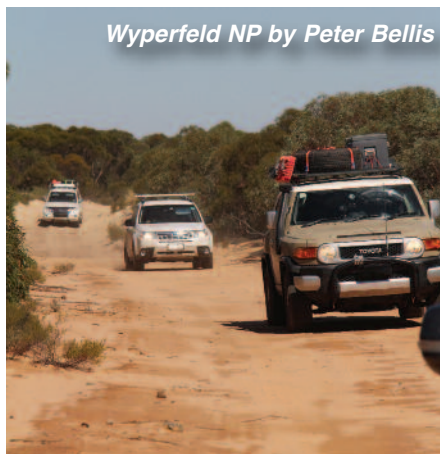
Lunch was taken soon afterwards at a spot where other vehicles coming along the track could slide past us. Convoy order was changed to put Jenny and Chris behind Paul and Richard, who were entrusted with keeping an eye on the 'newbies.' Paul told them they should drive the car like a "stolen Mini" (with reference to the movie 'The Italian Job') and at every opportunity they did that!

All seemed to be working well for the "stolen Mini" until they reached the challenge of the Hensley Trig Dune, the highest of the day. After several false starts and lots of digging, a massive effort from Paul got them free and to the summit.

Between the dunes, the track was being conquered bit by bit. Chris was reliving his teenage years by driving the Forester like it was stolen. The tracks ups and downs could be described as a swell on the ocean, and Brent and Elaine christened their Troopie "The Queen Mary" because of its ability to accentuate the swell even more! Just 6 kilometres from the campsite at Doggers Hut, Chris and Jenny were bogged again, and Paul again pulled them out with the promise of a cold beer at the end of the day!

Mid-afternoon became late afternoon as we finally reached Doggers Hut and its burnt scenery surrounding an otherwise lovely haven. Soon after setting up the sun set on the horizon with fantastic shades of pastel pinks and blues. Later in the evening as we sat around, we all marvelled at the night skies, which were complete with satellites and shooting stars and the backdrop of the Milky Way. This had been a memorable day, thanks to everyone in the group that made it so.

Sunday April 4th: The day started with the Toilet Tent Challenge. It took everyone to wrestle the tent back into the bag. All rolling by 9:00 am, after we enjoyed an extra hour due to daylight savings changeover, we also



had a visit from the Easter Bunny.

Overall, the sand was easier, and no one needed "assistance". Skill levels had increased, and cars had optimal tyre pressures and 4WD settings. Driving their Forester like a stolen Mini, Chris and Jenny managed all the dunes often with a few wheels off the ground.

The route continued south on the Border Track, turned left (East) just before Red Bluff and then left (North) again onto the Murrayville Road towards Big Billy Bore. Along the route we had a quick stop at the top of a rise for photos, then photos of us all on the track. At morning tea, we shared lots of homemade goodies, ANZAC cookies, almond slice, carrot cake. We also watched Chris's drone flying. When we reached the Murrayville Road, we stopped to reinflate our tyres and have lunch.

The plan was to camp the night at Big Billy Bore, but instead we found a lovely renovated camp at the Chinaman Well turnoff and stopped early. It was 12 months old and barely used. Toilets, bore water, shelter and tables and seats. We were all glad of the early stop after two long days.

After gossiping through the afternoon heat, we settled into 'formal drinks and nibbles' with delicacies shared including Sabrina's home-made cheese and Jeevan's vegetarian samosa. Beer tasting and the best ways to transport red wine triggered serious discussion and agreement to test each other's methods.

Dinners were cooked and everyone drifted back to the circle near the shelter to eat and continue the variety of conversations. As the light faded, we watched the desert night sky appear. We were interrupted by calls of satellite or meteor and the occasional plane. We retired for the night about 9:00pm, all exhausted.

Monday April 5th: Some were up earlier than others to photograph the

sunrise, which again was spectacular. Jeevan ran his Yoga class again for those who wished to join him. With everyone packed and ready to leave, Graeme and Kerry discovered that their back awning had vibrated loose. It took a few moments to solve the situation. We headed along the Murrayville Track to the Milmed track where we deflated our tyres. There was lots of sand and some steep dunes. The stolen Mini (Chris and Jenny's Forester) had to be called into action at times, but all was good. The Queen Mary was also relaunched to replace Brent and Elaine's Cruiser over the very undulating track.

Milmed Rock was reached and climbed. Kerry and Graeme had to stop to make more repairs to their back awning, so we had morning tea while we waited. We took the group photo with everyone on the rock. We stopped for lunch about 1:00pm at Arnold Springs. It was here that Colin and Sabrina decided that they would not stop but keep going as they needed to make it to Mount Gambier that evening. Jeevan decided that he would go with them as he was going to meet up with the second OCCV trip that was spending the whole week in the Murray Sunset National Park. The rest of us had a quick lunch and were on our way. Back on the gravel road, we reflat our tyres and officially ended the trip. Goodbyes were said and we all left to go our various directions.

It was a great trip. We really seemed to come together as a group. We talked and laughed, we supported and we encouraged. We all improved our sand driving skills and learnt more about the capabilities of our vehicles. There are modifications to make, new ideas to implement and gear to purchase, but we all agreed that it was just wonderful to be able to go away on a trip and enjoy the beauty and the peace of the bush.

Report submitted by Jean Bellis with contributions by Jenny Peacock, Chris Hayward, Colin Hardie and Sabrina Crosthwaite.

Photos by Kerry Gill, Elaine and Brent McCunn, Richard Seleebe, Chris Hayward and Peter and Jean Bellis Offroad and Camping Club of Victoria (OCCV)

(The OCCV is a small but growing club that was formed in 2018 by a group of people who love 4WDing and the joy of getting out and about exploring the Victorian bush and beauty of Australia together.)



Seriously Suzuki High Country trip



The Seriously Suzuki group were to have had a trip to Coffs Harbour to make another film suitable for TV and promotions, but due to Covid-19, this had to be put on hold. However, with the easing of restrictions, we decided instead, to do a trip to the High Country. Many roads were closed due to fires and erosion so a trip was planned to an area we don't often visit. It became a great trip with many challenges, river crossings and beautiful scenery.

The group consisted of seven Suzukis and one honorary SUZUKI!, our support vehicle, Brad Toohey in his Nissan Patrol, has been our support vehicle on all of our trips and has earned his place with his capable vehicle, easy going attitude and it seems, endless patience.

Participants were, Brad Toohey and passenger, Carrie Teese who came along to help with filming of the trip - GU Nissan Patrol, David and Libby Raeburn - 1978 LJ81 Ute with 50mm suspension lift, one litre motor, custom canopy with 235x75 R15 Coragia M/T tyres which were fitted to all cars except the Jimny. Rick and Ros Nortzel - driving a 1984 SJ410 Sierra with a 1.3 motor, 5 speed gear box, 50mm suspension lift and a custom canopy. Steve and Ruth Raeburn - 1992 short wheel base Sierra with a hard top, 50mm body lift, rock crawler reduction gears and a 1.6 G16A motor. Al and Barb Johnson from Seriously Suzuki driving a long wheel base Vitara

Wagon with diff locks, crawler gears and a 50mm lift. Tony Raeburn and partner Sara driving one of the last Sierras with coil suspension, at this stage, unmodified. Dave Rogers - 1989 Sierra widetrack with standard suspension. Rob and Josie Patterson - new Jimny with upgraded tyres but otherwise, standard.

The aim of the trip was to compare the older Suzukis with the technical advances made to the new model Suzuki.

The crew left Bairnsdale on Friday morning; the first stop was the road side stop near Ensay for some photos then on to Omeo to top up fuel and up the Omeo Valley Road to the Hinnomunjie Bridge, for introductions and more photos. From there we headed up Kellys Road just after the Eight Mile Loop. The road was closed, so we returned and proceeded up the Eight Mile Loop Road and part way along, we came to a short, steep, rutted out section. The LJ81 started losing power badly, it had a fuel blockage due to bad fuel. After checking the fuel flow, it was found the fuel line and filters were entirely blocked. Al came to the rescue with his air compressor and with help from Steve the fuel lines were blown out and the filters replaced. We continued on thinking the problem was fixed, but several more issues came to light later in the trip, so after the trip, a complete clean

out of the entire fuel system will be carried out. We then continued on to the Four Mile Creek Track, intending on visiting Kennedys Hut, but the road was closed so we had our first camp at Taylors Crossing on the Mitta Mitta River. This is a really nice, open camp site. The river was running high and fast, but there was a lovely swing bridge put in by the army to get to the toilet on the other side.

Saturday was a beautiful cool morning. Camp was packed and we headed up Four Mile Creek Track to the Wombat Post Office Hut; the track provided some steep climbs and technical driving. At the Post Office, we looked at the dedication stone, displaying the names of some of the people who died in the area. It is said that the original Post Office owner, when the Post Office looked like closing due to the lack of mail, used to write letters to himself to keep it open.

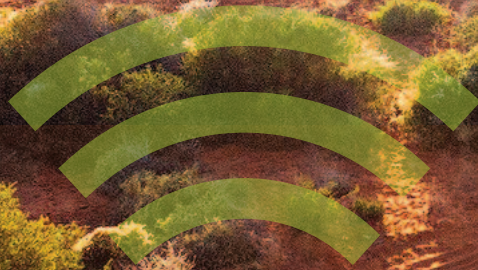
We sat around and had morning tea in the sun. Steve found another track just around the corner from the hut



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Without the mods that he has, we decided not to try it so we returned to the Post Office before heading up Spur Track, on to the Razor Back track then down Limestone Gap Track to Quart Pot Hut. This is a fairly long trip in and out and there were other campers in there catching a few trout in the creek near the hut. From there we travelled Tokes Creek Track to a branch of the Dartmouth Dam. The water was down a bit but the fishermen were catching a few good fish. The track is ten kilometres to the dam and is slow going and steep in patches. There are not many level campsites, but we found one with two areas to camp. After dinner, we sat around the fire telling stories and looking at the great display of stars.

We had heard of the restoration of a big 200 horse power Crossley engine at Yellow Glen Mine near Glen Wills, so we went to have a look at it. There was a volunteer present who gave us a talk on the history of the engine and invited us to the starting after the current rebuild.



From there we continued to Omeo to refuel and on to a nice camp on the Livingstone River behind Cobungra Station. This is the largest station in Victoria, about 26,000 acres. During the evening at camp, we did a survey to determine the good and bad points of each vehicle. The LJ81 was voted the 'coolest' vehicle but the noisiest and least comfortable, but very capable. The Sierras were the most desirable and very capable, the best touring vehicle was the Vitara Wagon because of the comfort level and room to pack gear. The new Jimny was the quietest, most comfortable and the most economical.



Next day we headed down the Berrigan Road to the Dogs Grave then down Danes track, which is really rough but not too difficult at present. The track into Camms Top Place had many big bog holes, but all had chicken tracks around them, Brad went through one but bottomed out on another and had to winch himself out. From there we went up Danes Track then to Killgowers Camp which is a beautiful camp on the Wentworth River. It was hot and dusty so we spent the rest of the afternoon sitting in the river enjoying the company of good friends.

Tuesday morning, travelling down Jones Road, we had to cut fallen trees off the road before returning home via Dargo. It was a great trip with good friends, and it is always good to travel in the Suzukis; it adds another dimension to travelling in the High Country. The film will come out early next year and we're all looking forward to that.

David Raeburn.

As avid four wheel drivers we all know when going into the bush to go prepared and take plenty of supplies both for general use and emergency. I recently acquired a Zoleo Satellite Communicator from our friends at the Sat Phone Shop to add to my emergency equipment, and to give those around me in my personal life peace of mind when I go into the bush.

The device is simple and anyone can use it. It extends your phone's messaging coverage to absolutely everywhere and provides a simple safety system that not only you but those at home can rely and count on. The device itself has two buttons, an SOS button for when you find yourself in an emergency and need help and as check in button, which sends a message to pre-set numbers allowing you to let people know you are safe even when you are not in coverage. I, myself when setting the device up pressed the check in button to see what would happen, within seconds I had received a message from both my children checking in with me as they had no idea I had the device and their numbers in it. It might also be a good idea to let those whose numbers you save that you have the device so they understand who sent the message.

The emergency button is monitored by a team 24/7, and through the phone app you are able to communicate to this team until help arrives as well as being able to cancel the emergency if it was a false alarm. The check in button also allows you to share your GPS coordinates with your check in contacts, allowing them to track you along each time you check in with them, what a great feature!

The Zoleo Satellite Communicator is a great device and I strongly recommend others to add it to your emergency gear when going somewhere lacking reception no matter whether you are a four wheel driver, bushwalker or undertake any other hobby in remote areas.

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LROCV

High Country Exploration



The initial plan for this trip was to kick off the New Year by gathering a group of like-minded LROCV folk and head out on a circuit of the Victorian High Country, taking in iconic locations like Licola, Talbotville, and Mounts Blue Rag, Cobbler, Stirling and Buller. But, of course, this was all with the backdrop of widespread fires across much of Victoria. So the plan was expected to change at short notice – and it did!

In the days leading up to the trip I kept an active watch on all the relevant websites for fire danger and closures as this was surely the biggest single risk we would face. As large parts of Victoria burned, almost unbelievably the pocket of the Alpine National Park (ANP) we would head into remained unscathed and open for travel. It was most likely that this good luck would not continue, so I looked at possible Plan B, C and even D variations to the trip so that if it did go ahead any risks would be minimised and all participants would be kept as safe as possible.

As I pressed the 'GO' button on the trip our previous good fortune suddenly deserted us. On New Year's Eve, a storm passing over the ANP lit a series of fires with dry lightning strikes.

Whilst people celebrated the

oncoming New Year and a group of wedding guests partied into the night a few minutes down the road, I sat with Prue who was co-located at the Licola campsite, looking over maps by torchlight, discussing the options I had come up with. This was helpful as Prue gave some good suggestions from her many years running trips with John.

Day 1 – 1 January

As is the custom with trips, everyone arrived at the appointed time outside Licola General Store, ready to go and enjoy some Alpine scenery. For me, there were new members to meet. I have always found fellow members to be friendly and chatty, and our merry

band was no different! Before setting off we collectively re-evaluated the fire situation as we knew it. It was agreed that we would follow the original route out of Licola to The Pinnacles. I knew that there was a fire tower there, so useful information about the local situation could be obtained. Also, we would not have committed ourselves to entering an area which would be hard to escape from if that became necessary. If we couldn't proceed past the Pinnacles down Billy Goat Bluff Track, then we could easily return to the vicinity of Licola to camp for the night and perhaps enter the ANP from another route.



Circuit Trip



As our party climbed into the hills, the smoke haze we had observed earlier became thicker. Peaks that would normally be easy to spot were lost in the dense smoke. This smoke was coming from Gippsland, as there was no actual fire threat close by. Stopping briefly at the lookout on the Tamboritha Rd, we chatted with a local farmer and his wife who were transporting bales of hay to some of their animals grazing on their Alpine properties.

Arriving at The Pinnacles for lunch, we walked to the fire tower to take in the magnificent views of even thicker smoke blanketing the area. Somewhere out there was Billy Goat,

Talbotville and the rest of the ANP, but we weren't going to see it today! We chatted with the Parks Vic ranger in the fire tower, and presented him with a photo David had brought of a previous visit to an older version of the fire tower in the 1970s. The ranger was able to tell us that there were fires near Buller and Blue Rag, so the Dargo High Plains Rd was closed. Talbotville was still open, but who knew for how long and it was effectively a dead end with a long, slow climb if escape was necessary. So, we enacted Plan B and headed back towards Licola.

On the way back, Prue suggested visiting Mt Wellington. This proved to

be a great idea as it gave us some Medium tracks to negotiate and some spectacular views from the summit (marked by a cairn I had camped beside nearly 30 years ago), as the smoke had now been blown away by an afternoon breeze. We followed Mt Wellington Track all the way to Millers Hut for another stop.

This was like an oasis amongst the devastation of recent fires in the area. Prue explained how the hut had been specifically saved only months earlier by firefighters wrapping it in a special fire resistant foil. Millers Hut would make a splendid overnight campsite. Retracing our path, we returned to the Tamboritha Rd and eventually found a pleasant campsite close to Licola and on the banks of the Wellington River. This first night passed uneventfully for most, except Prue who encountered a small bat flying around her camper in the middle of the night. Rather than wake the camp, she spent the night in the cab of her Toyota!

Day 2 – 2 January

After Chris has finished changing over a wheel with a suspect bulge in the side of a tyre, we headed back to Licola to obtain a situation update from the General Store. This would then help to inform our next move, and also meant that if people wanted to leave the trip or it had to be abandoned then it would be easy to return to safer areas in the south. The Licola store keeper was very helpful, especially as he had the only Internet connection in town! We confirmed that Dargo High Plains Rd was still closed due to extensive fire activity. This ruled out any visit to Blue Rag, Bright or even Mt Buffalo for that matter. In our group meeting I suggested we head for Jamieson, via Mt Skene. From Jamieson we might be able to complete a road run north to Cheshunt to pick up our original route



again and turn south to camp near Lake William Hovell. Jamieson would be a good location because we could refuel and either head north to Mansfield and then Cheshunt or south towards Woods Point depending on the situation, or remain in town if necessary. All agreed to this.

It was another pleasant drive to Mt Skene, with more great views, despite the smoke haze. We stopped at look-outs to pinpoint specific fires in the distance and had lunch at the summit. It was a different experience seeing the 'real' Mt Skene when not under two feet of snow! Alas, there was no trace of Felix's snowman he had constructed in August. I was concerned that the road to Jamieson may have been closed, but we passed a number of cars that had come from Jamieson and all reported that the road was open. Taking the opportunity of excellent data coverage, I checked for fire updates. To my dismay, fires were now burning around Mts Buffalo and Cobbler and the road to Cheshunt was closed. This meant moving to Plan C and plotting a new route whilst en route to Jamieson. With the ANP effectively closed, we would head south. I had looked up Mt Terrible earlier and having been to Mt Matlock some months earlier, these seemed like good options joined by decent 4wd tracks. Heading south down the Mansfield-Woods Point Rd I was looking for Skipworth Reserve. If it was a clear campsite we could stay there and perhaps make use of the Goulburn River for a dip as it was 30 odd degrees of course. All the campsites we came across were filled and it turned out we couldn't camp at Skipworth. It was still only mid-afternoon so we headed up Poletti track, then onto Mt Terrible Track to make Mt Terrible our camp for the night. Again, this was strategic because we were up high out of the valley with an excellent view all around and multiple escape routes should things turn nasty. There was a manned fire tower where we could pick up more information, not to mention mobile coverage.

Mt Terrible turned out to have a fabulous view back towards Mt Buller and the smoke plumes from various fires were easy to see. The rebuilt hut there was also worthy of investigation.

In terms of camping, we had Mt Terrible to ourselves, except for the fire tower observer, who happily called down to us for a chat and later joined us on the ground for a more



detailed discussion of the fire situation. Apparently, the bare area we had camped on was earmarked as a possible location for a new fire tower which may be built sometime in the near future.

Day 3 – 3 January

We awoke to a beautiful sunrise and a valley that had filled with smoke overnight. We had excellent vision from our high location. Our friendly fire tower observer told us that all campers down in the valley on the Mansfield-Woods Point Rd were being told to leave immediately because of

the thick smoke, but we were free to keep travelling towards Mt. Matlock.

We set off South down Mt. Terrible Track again, then onto Ryan Spur Track. These tracks constantly varied in width, steepness and scenery.

They were most enjoyable, except for the 'spoon' drains. Well, we imagined that is what they were meant to be. In reality, almost every drain proved to be a steep mound with a deep trench behind it. Less drains than bumpy wheel traps that varied in width and depth. Much fun was had by all participants navigating these chassis twisting surprises!

Our morning tea stop was at Ryan's Spur Hut, which is close to the old A1 Mining Settlement. This is a pleasant little shaded hut almost in the middle of the track, so you can't miss it. It was repaired by several 4x4 clubs and the Victorian High Country Huts Association in early 2018 specifically for four-wheel drivers to stop at. Continuing south, we finally climbed a





steep section of track to abruptly find ourselves on Boundary Track. There was extensive evidence of logging here, which was disappointing as it broke up the forest with a devastated looking landscape. Boundary Track soon became Corn Hill Rd and an exciting rocky climb up Frenchman's Gap Track took us to a brief stop on Corn Hill itself. Then a few more twists and turns along Corn Hill Rd took us up onto Mt Matlock. The last time I had been here (August 2019) the ground was deep in snow with more falling from the sky. It was such a contrast with the hot, dusty and smoky conditions we found this day. There were no further relevant updates from the fire tower observer so we took the opportunity for a group photo before Chris and Dali left the trip and headed for home. From Mt Matlock we had options about where to head next and where to ultimately camp for the night. One option was to head further south towards Walhalla and camp at Aberfeldy Bridge. If we couldn't go there, then it was easy to go West towards Cambarville and set up at one of the Big River Rd campsites. Both options would be taking

us close to bigger towns and safety in the event of fires. It was decided to head down into Woods Point as there is a lovely, ferny picnic area beside the Goulburn River, which would be a perfect lunch spot. Going into Woods Point also meant we could chat with locals about the fire situation. Max and Ann spoke with shopkeepers at the Post Office and suggested I did as well. The shopkeepers told us that all campsites in town and down to Walhalla, were being evacuated as a precaution with total fire ban days coming up. In another group meeting we discussed this information and agreed to head towards Big River Rd for our last night. This was one of the last sections in the state which was still open to the public! The drive along the Marysville-Woods Point Rd was uneventful, but scenic. At the turnoff to Big River Rd, Max and Ann also left us for home. The remainder of our party headed to Stockman's Reward Camping Ground where we could finally have a splash in a cool creek (bliss!)

We sat in our group for dinner and later, Richard entertained us with a

funny and very long story concerning 4WDs, horse racing and the United Arab Emirates.

Richard also later made this observation about the trip:

"Alas I didn't get to see the 'Smokey I bet' views from Blue Rag. Perhaps next time. This time around I was at least spared the burnt out places not visited. Ironically each of the three fire towers visited were to say, superfluous as they couldn't see much either due to all the smoke. Though one Fire Watcher did say he could tell the difference between the column of dust from a heavy logging truck and smoke, only because the truck's dust moved when it got going again. Dust, Smoke and more Dust enroute did culminate in my refreshing river cooled beer on the last camp, almost better than a shower. Then to top that off the lush forest and tall trees around the Cumberland Junction were a sight to behold. My eyes were overwhelmed and my brain kept deigning that such beautiful country could turn to black."





Day 4 – 4 January

In the morning, with the trip now officially finished, we said our farewells and left camp one by one. Some went via Marysville, but I always prefer the more scenic drive down to Warburton and so followed that route back to Melbourne. It was a day of Total Fire Ban, so our departure from the bush was timely as all campsites were being closed anyway.

Upon reflection, there were several aspects of this trip which I believe contributed to its success, given the backdrop of fire danger. The over-riding concern was safety for all participants. All decisions were made about each stage with this as a priority. Communication and discussion within our group was therefore important. We were lucky to have some very experienced and practical people in our group which made our meetings easier as they could critically analyse the plan and decide if it sounded reasonable or not. It was reassuring that everyone was happy to continue from Licola to Jamieson and beyond when they could easily have withdrawn safely from the trip. Access to timely information was critical in decision making. In particular,

local and 'official' sources made it easier to make 'safer' decisions and keep the trip going. By co-locating with fire towers I knew that we would hear about and be able to see fire dangers before they became a threat. Even though the fire towers themselves can't see much when surrounded by smoke, they were in radio and telephone communication with each other, plus had live Internet updates. Higher points also allowed us to get mobile coverage. Prue was also monitoring ABC radio for live fire reports. In planning routes I had anticipated that some or even most areas may be closed off to us and so I planned for alternate routes, including multiple escape routes close to towns depending on where fire hazards might come from. No plan can account for every possibility, but I felt as if we had most relevant 'bases' covered.

In conclusion, thank you to everyone who came on the trip and made it so enjoyable. Special thanks to Prue for being a good sounding board, Dali who did a fabulous job as TEC and to Ellen-Jane Browne, who, whilst not on the trip, provided us with daily updates on the fire situation around the state when Internet access was hit and miss. Hopefully we are able to run this trip again soon and finally complete the ANP circuit!

This is a brief recollection of trip highlights from Prue:

"New Year's Eve was spent driving to Licola on my much anticipated first solo 4WD trip in many years. The fast evolving fire situation meant that James needed to have plans B, C and through to Z in play throughout the trip. With some great 4WD tracks each day, interesting camp sites, clear and hazy views, discussions with fire spotters in their towers, good company and a route well away from any danger, the High Country trip was a marvellous way to spend part of my Christmas leave. My only complaint was the bat I discovered flying in the Trayon camper at 1.00am one morning. After quickly decamping I slept in the cab of the Toyota for the rest of the night. Oh and how could I forget the added danger of Felix and the dreaded giant water pistol (luckily the weather was warm!)"

James Lawson

Trip participants

James (Trip Leader), Catherine (15) and Felix (9) Lawson – Defender 110
Prue Hasler – Toyota
Max and Ann Ritter – Discovery 4
David Johnson – Defender 110
Richard Beilharz – Discovery 1
Christopher Bradbury – Range Rover
Dalibor Bohacik (TEC) – Discovery 4

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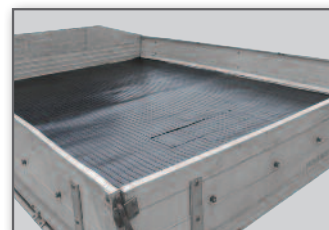
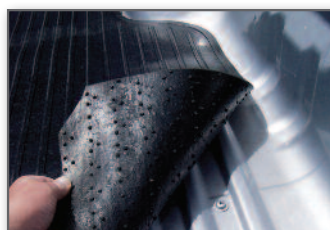
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WHAT MAKES YOU SO SPECIAL?

The importance of working together ...

No man is an island (John Donne); Life is easier (and can be a lot more fun) when you are part of a network of friends and family, a community.

In these days of looking out for number one, community isn't always what it is supposed to be. We'd all like to think we live in a place where people care about others -- where people pitch in to help, especially when things get rough. But this isn't always what we experience.

It seems that we are often reminded when things get tough to "Pull yourself up by your bootstraps, my grandfather did". That may be true, but many of those "bootstraps" are no longer available today. A major contributor to this issue is that the supportive community of our grandparent's day, the community where people looked out for each other and supported each other, in many places is no more. It has gone the way of the gaslight, the horse, and the buggy. And we're paying a really big price for that loss.

One of the main attributes of your 4WD

Club (& 4WD Victoria) is our sense of community, helping others, working with others, enabling others. Being a part of the 4WD community while working within the broader community.

The ancient African proverb states; it takes a village, to work with the family, to raise a child and weather the storms of life. If we want that kind of support, the place to begin is with ourselves. Community, like charity, begins at home. You start building a good neighbourhood when you yourself decide that you will be a good neighbour.

Many of us feel like we are judged on our disabilities rather than on our abilities. There is no doubt, sometimes this is true, but often we give people little choice as we are slow to acknowledge our weaknesses and quick to focus on our own agenda and selling our self assessed strengths. Working with others takes serious effort on everyone's part. What can be achieved when we get it right ... you can judge that for yourselves.

Here are a few tips that might help:

- Acknowledge and understand your

own strengths and weaknesses.

- Acknowledge and use the skill strengths, ideas and opinions of others.
- Let others know when they are doing a good job.
- Respect the feelings, views and values of others.
- Support and encourage others by helping those who need assistance.
- Accept assistance from others willingly.
- Do not avoid conflict. Respectfully address issues or problems when they happen, not ignore them.

How do you think you can help build a better community?

... and what are you prepared to do about it?



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