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Vice President	John Partridge	0428 331 211	vicepres@vfwdc.com
Treasurer	Craig Major	0432 876 699	treasurer@vfwdc.com
Secretary	Paul Ryan	0438 121 148	secretary@vfwdc.com

GENERAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Assistant Secretary	Lesley Peters		asstsec@vfwdc.com
Trip Co ordinator	John Partridge	0428 331 211	trips@vfwdc.com
Training Co ordinator	Michael Rodger	0412 530 666	training@vfwdc.com
Newsletter Editor	Lesley Peters		editor@vfwdc.com

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	Michael Rodger	0412 530 666	training@vfwdc.com
	Paul Ryan	0438 121 148	secretary@vfwdc.com.au
New Member Contact	Paul Ryan	0438 121 148	
Web Manager	Paul Ryan		

Forward Articles & Photos for the Newsletter to:

editor@vfwdc.com

All contributions to be submitted prior to the 20th of each month

CLUB DETAILS

Registered Name:	Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club Inc
Registration No:	A002184F
All Correspondence:	The Secretary Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club Inc PO Box 778 Dandenong Vic 3173
Email:	secretary@vfwdc.com.au
Web Site:	www.vfwdc.com
Meetings:	Held first Tuesday of each month excluding January (no meeting). The November meeting is held on the 2 nd Tuesday of the month due to Melbourne Cup public holiday.
Location:	Dandenong Library Stuart Street Dandenong 3175

The opinions given herein are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Committee of Management, or the Member body of the VFWDC Inc.

President's Report



Hello and welcome to another month of *Free Wheeling*.

Well, over the past few months we have all seen the dramatic price increase of diesel fuel. I would estimate that at least 60% of members run diesel vehicles and are as confused as me as to why the increase has been so significant. I have seen diesel some 20 cents higher than petrol. To help me understand the reasoning behind this I contacted both BP and the ACCC to explain the reason. While I haven't received any replies, I will keep you posted when I do. What makes it even more confusing is that European diesel is still priced lower than petrol so there should be no reason as to the sudden increase here. Unfortunately, filling up 180 litres becomes a costly exercise and doesn't look to be getting any easier.

When you add all the other expenses involved, the weekend trip starts to become a scary prospect and will no doubt stop people from attending trips as regularly as they would like. In the past there have been several vehicles with drivers only, and perhaps members should consider being a passenger, or taking a passenger, to help share the cost. If you would like to attend a trip and have someone to share the cost with, please write your name in the trip book and make a note if you have room for a passenger or want to be one. John will help coordinate this and notify you.

Time is drawing closer to the Club elections and this year we **NEED** fresh faces on the committee. While all positions are up for election there are some committee members who will not be standing. As a result, we require new faces to bring in fresh ideas and help keep this club strong for many more years. If there are aspects of the Club you would like changed or moved in a different direction here is your chance to contribute. Unfortunately, in past years the battle to form a committee is a last minute rush during the AGM. This year I want to avoid this and ensure we have nominations in prior to the AGM. If you would like more information on any positions or just like to discuss the committee workings, please do not hesitate to call me.

From all reports the visit by Affinity at the last meeting went well. The coverage is comprehensive and from recent experience the premiums are far more competitive. When your renewal arrives give them a call and you may be pleasantly surprised. And don't forget they are offering 13 months for the price of 12 for new policies. Just make sure you mention our Club when taking out a policy.

John has set up a Club Photobucket account for members to upload their trip photos and videos. These can be enjoyed by all members without having to download large files. This will also make it easier for the Editor to gather photos for the newsletter. More details are in the newsletter so be sure to check it out.

See you on the next trip – or at the next meeting.

Ashley Martin
President

Minutes of the General Meeting – 1 April 2008

The meeting was held at Dandenong Library and opened by Vice-President John Partridge who welcomed everyone to the meeting. John also welcomed guest speakers LeeAnn and Jeanette from Affinity Insurance Brokers.

Present: There were 18 members present as per the attendance book.

Apologies:

Phillip Griffiths, Ashley Martin, Lesley Peters, Maxine Ryan, Leigh and Anne Pettigrew, Steve and Jill Boyle, Anthony and Aline Van Buiten.

Visitors:

Mark Felton and Catherine Thorne, Rob Carratello, Rosa Salvitti, Rohan Marshall.

Minutes of the March meeting:

Accepted: Tim Axtell.

Seconded: Craig Major.

Matters Arising: Nil

Correspondence In:

- Overland Cruising
- Cross Country Jeep Club
- Otway 4 Wheeler
- Eureka Echo
- Invoice for Springvale Meeting Room for Training Theory Night

Correspondence Out:

- Thankyou letter to Glenmount Automotive.
- Thankyou letter to ARB.
- Newsletter.

Treasurer's Report:

Opening Balance: \$9475.32
Receipts: \$ 90.00
Payments: \$ 957.49

Cheque Account: \$2418.30
Term Deposit: \$6076.35
Petty Cash: \$ 52.50

Closing Balance: \$8546.85

Accepted: **Tim Baker**

Seconded: **Bruce Cremonesi**

Guest Speakers - LeeAnn and Jeanette from Affinity Insurance Brokers.

LeeAnn and Jeanette kindly agreed to come and speak to the club after we had had some contact

with Affinity at the Wandin 4WD show. Their presentation was very good and both appeared very knowledgeable about the products and services offered by Affinity. The policies they offer are now underwritten by Lumley Australia and they believe that a lot of the earlier problems they have had with 4WD insurance have now been ironed out. This appeared evident in the type and level of cover they now offer and the competitive premiums that have been quoted to some members. In summary some of the important points they covered were:

- Vehicle Accessories are insured to replacement value.
- 2nd sets of off-road tyres are covered whether on the vehicle or at home.
- Greater than 3" lifts are covered as long as they are professionally fitted or have been assessed as mechanically compliant (i.e. your mechanic advises that they are properly fitted).
- Unlimited towing costs & storage.
- Members who signed as a result of their presentation would receive 13 months cover for the price of 12.
- A commission is paid to the club if the applicant specifically mentions the club name when taking out insurance.
- Affinity now offers Caravan & Camper insurance.
- Camping equipment up to \$5000.00 is covered.
- Multi-policy, club discounts etc apply.

It would be fair to say that those present were very impressed with the presentation and the Committee and Members would like to express their thanks to LeeAnn and Jeanette for giving up their time to come and speak to us.

Trip Reports:

- Labour Day Weekend O'Tooles – given by John Partridge. The weekend was spent camping at Little O'Tooles which has been closed. Thanks to our relationship with Parkers Corner DSE we were able to obtain the key and had exclusive use of the campground. The noise from O'Tooles campground just across the creek was almost constant all weekend and included bikes, music and rocks being thrown at the signage. On the whole O'Tooles was packed. John intends to write to the authorities to ask what is intended to be done about this sort of situation. Saturday

was spent exploring the area taking in some of the history including Mt Selma and Mulholland mine. The mine is still in good repair despite the bushfires. Although some of the old mining equipment outside didn't fair quite as well after the fires and floods there is still plenty to see. On the way back the group stopped at Kitty Cane's grave. Sunday was mostly driving, taking in S Track, Army, Morning Star, Whitespur and Willoughby Tracks. Monday the group packed up and came home.

- Mechanics Night – given by Paul Ryan. This was the inaugural Mechanics Night held at Glenmount Automotive in Mt Waverley. Kent Phillips, the owner, went to a lot of trouble organizing guest speakers from Mickey Thompson and Ride-Pro Suspension who gave very informative, if lengthy presentations. Unfortunately this wasn't quite the type of night we had anticipated and the amount of time looking over vehicles was quite short. We are hoping that together with Kent we can plan a more mechanically based event in the not too distant future.
- Easter Hattah-Kulkyne – given by Tim Axtell. Tim travelled up with Paul on Good Friday arriving not long after lunch. Tim soon discovered that sand can be a lot softer than it looks particularly with a caravan attached to the back of the car. On the whole the weekend was very relaxing, the camping spot was great and the kids had a good time which makes life easier for everyone. Some went in to Mildura on the Saturday and for a drive around the Hattah on Sunday. All in all a good weekend.

Trip Coordinator's Report:

- | | |
|--|---------|
| • APR 2/5-6: Proficiency Training | Michael |
| • APR 11-12: Big River | Tim |
| • APR 20: Tallarook DT | John |
| • APR 25-27: Anzac Weekend
Horseyard (changed from Rushworth) | Ashley |
| • MAY 9-11: Otways/Dandos | Ashley |
| • MAY 18: Toolangi Challenge | Shane |
| • MAY 23-25: High Country Huts | Shane |
| • JUN 7-9: Queens Birthday W/end
Rushworth | Paul |
| • JUN 21-22: Avoca | John |
| • JUL 11-13: Annual Snow Trip | Craig |

Association Report: Nil.

General Business:

- Little O'Tooles: Our exclusive access to this campground has been as a direct result of our association with Parkers Corner DSE.
- Lone Graves: A project (again working with Parkers Corner DSE) is underway to mark some of the Lone Graves exposed by the bush fires and floods. This will probably be in the Toombon /

Edward's Reef area and will be organized on dates TBA.

- Craigs Hut: It would appear that there is some ill feeling amongst locals / visitors regarding what they consider to be the mismanagement of the Craig's Hut rebuild and this has been the subject of some local newspaper articles.
- Fazing out of the 121.5 MHz EPIRBS to the 406MHz units. As a result of the decommissioning of some satellites the old EPIRB network is closing. The new units are in short supply so please factor this in if you intend travelling to remote areas where an EPIRB may be required.
- VEAC & the Murray River Red Gum
 - o Newsletter at the information centre at Hattah regarding misleading information out in the public. According to info at the centre:
 - Camping will be permitted
 - State Park will remain just that
 - Solid fuel fires will be permitted outside fire danger periods
- Other media news
 - o PV Campfire safety - available on Parks Website
 - o PV Ranger Roo has arrived! Soft toy - \$19.50. Whoopee!
 - o PV reminder about the Bush Telegraph. Phone 132 874 (13 BUSH) to report anything of note.

Other Business:

John took the opportunity to welcome new members Andy and Jane Davis to the club. John also thanked James Holden for printing up a new batch of Trip forms for the club.

Merchandise:

Some members expressed interest in purchasing Club merchandise. We are currently low on stock and need to order some. May we suggest that if you would like to purchase specific items that you email your order to committee@vfwdc.com and a Committee member will respond asap.

Tea Duties: Judy Davis – thankyou.

Raffle:

1st Prize - Torch won by Gary Smith
 2nd Prize - DVD won by Bruce Cremonesi
 3rd Prize - Laptop adapter won by Carl Surtees
 4th Prize - Free Range Eggs won by Tim Baker

Meeting closed at 9.50pm.

Next Meeting:

8.00pm, Tuesday 6 May 2008 at Dandenong Library Meeting Room.

Yahoo Groups

Sign yourself up as a Yahoo user at
<http://groups.yahoo.com>

(There is no charge for this service.)

Then go to

[Hhttp://autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/vfwdc](http://autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/vfwdc) and click on "Join this group".

To keep non members out of the group, your membership will need to be approved.

Any problems, email

Hanthony@ctsmonash.com.au



CLUB KITCHEN

Chilli and Honey Barbequed Steak with Coleslaw

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons barbecue sauce
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 fresh long red chilli, chopped finely
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 4 x 200g New York cut steak

Coleslaw

- 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 2 cups finely shredded white cabbage
- 1 cup finely shredded red cabbage
- 1 medium (120g) carrot, grated coarsely
- 3 spring onions sliced thinly

METHOD

Combine barbecue and Worcestershire sauces, honey, chilli and garlic in a large bowl; add the beef, coat in the honey mixture.

Cook beef on heated oiled grill plate (or grill or barbecue) until browned on both sides and cooked as desired.

To make the coleslaw, whisk together vinegar and mayonnaise in a large bowl. Add cabbages, carrot and spring onions; toss gently.

Serve steaks with coleslaw.

Not suitable to freeze or microwave.

WINE: There's nothing like a good red wine to accompany a barbecue steak, so try a Shiraz or a classic Australian blend of Shiraz/Cabernet.



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CLUB CALENDER AT A GLANCE

MAY 2008

Tuesday 6 th	General Meeting	Ashley Martin	0438 600 904
Friday 9 th to Sunday 11 th	Otways-Dandos	Ashley Martin	0438 600 904
Sunday 18 th	Toolangi Challenge	Shane Michelin	0417 784 599
Tuesday 20 th	Committee Meeting	Craig Major	0432 876 699
Friday 30 th to Sunday 1 st June	Huts of the High Country	Bruce Cremonesi	0400 425 296

JUNE 2008

Tuesday 3 rd	General Meeting	Ashley Martin	0438 600 904
Queen's Birthday W/end Friday 6 th to Monday 9 th	Trip 1: Grampians	Bob McKerrow	0430 014 001
	Trip 2: Rushworth	Paul Ryan	0438 121 148
Tuesday 17 th	Committee Meeting	Michael Rodger	412 530 666
Saturday 21 st to Sunday 22 nd	Avoca	John Partridge	0428 331 211

JULY 2008

Tuesday 1 st	General Meeting	Ashley Martin	0438 600 904
Friday 11 th to Sunday 13 th	Annual Snow Trip	Craig Major	0432 876 699
Tuesday 17 th	Committee Meeting	Ashley Martin	0438 600 904

AUGUST 2008

Tuesday 5 th	General Meeting Incorporating Annual General Meeting	Ashley Martin	0438 600 904
Saturday 9 th	AGM Dinner Venue TBC	Ashley Martin	0438 600 904

Forthcoming Trips

Destination	OTWAYS – DANDOS
Trip Leader	ASHLEY MARTIN
Contact No	0438 600 904
Date	9-11 MAY
Meeting Place:	Shell Westgate
Vehicle Limits	MINIMUM: 3 MAXIMUM: 10
Grade	WET: Medium DRY: Easy/Medium
Equipment Required	Standard recovery equipment.
Last Available Fuel	Petrol: Diesel:
Maps Required	N/A
Radio Channel	12
Trip Activity Details:	<p>The weekend is to be an easy one exploring some of the many waterfalls throughout the region. Unfortunately the tracks around the area have diminished over time so there won't be a lot of driving. We will try to find a few to explore but I expect these will not be too difficult.</p> <p>Camping will be at Dando's which is near Beech Forrest, an easy drive from Melbourne. The drive in doesn't require any four wheeling. There are toilets facilities at the camping ground. I will distribute trip notes on how to get there closer to the date.</p>

DESTINATION	"TOOLANGI CHALLENGE"
Trip Leaderr	SHANE MICHELON
Contact No	0417 784 599 / 9800 1105
Date	SUNDAY 18 MAY
Meeting Place:	9.00am Yarra Glen Bakery
Vehicle Limits	MIN: 2 MAX: 6
Grade	WET: HARD DRY: MEDIUM
Equipment Required	Because this is a Medium/Hard trip, MT tyres, full recovery pack (ie snatch, shackles etc), vehicle recovery points, some lift over standard, low range.
Maps Required	Rooftop Toolangi Map
Radio Channel	12
Trip Activity Details	<p>Still tying down the tracks, but probably up Aeroplane, down Steep, west on Downies Spur. Other tracks to be determined.</p> <p>Further Information: Be aware that due top the nature of the tracks, there is possibility of minor panel damage or scrapes.</p>

DESTINATION	HUTS OF THE HIGH COUNTRY
Trip Leaderr	BRUCE CREMONESI
Contact No	Tel: 9750 6215 Mob: 0400 425296
Date	FRI 30 MAY-SUN 1 JUNE
Meeting Place:	Lilydale McDonalds – FRI 6pm Sheepyard Flat – SAT for 9am departure
Vehicle Limits	MIN: 3 MAXI: 6 NO TRAILERS
Grade	WET: Medium DRY: Easy – although there will be water crossings
Approx Kms	Lilydale to Sheepyard – 190kms Off-road – 100kms
Last Fuel	PETROL: Mansfield DIESEL: Mansfield
Maps Required	Rooftop Maps Bush Huts around Mansfield
Radio Channel	12
Equipment:	<p>A 4wd. Recovery gear. A Blind or Snorkel fitted. UHF radio and handheld if you have one. Good warm clothing & boots and spare dry clothes - it can be wet and COLD (minus 8 last time!). Camping Gear (tent, sleeping bags, pillows, tent, bog rol etc). Cooking gear, drinks and food. Food and drinks for Happy Hour. Cameras, there is lots to photograph up there for those that haven't been before unless its raining and cloudy ☹️. A smile, sense of adventure and humor. Any single blind girlfriends you may have</p>
Trip Activity Details:	<p>I am aiming for a casual fun easy weekend for my first trip with the club. This is a very easy fun trip to run, or travel along with. There will be some interesting sites thrown in for good measure. Good ATs will be a distinct advantage as some of these areas can turn to slurry with 10mins of rain. FRIDAY NIGHT: Camping at Sheepyard Flat, socialize with fire and drinks. SATURDAY: 9.30am departure unless ready earlier. The huts or site remains will be visited at this stage if possible.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 - Frys Hut 2 - Tunnel Bend 3 - Upper Jamieson Hut 4 - Refrigerator Gap 5 - Lovicks Hut 6 - Bluff Hut (burnt out) 7 - Pikes Flat

8 – Bindaree Hut. Either camp there or another location nearby.

If we are traveling well, we can continue onto Kings for first night.

SUNDAY: 9.30 departure unless ready earlier.

1 - Bindaree Falls – Walk up the hill for those willing, and you can go in behind the falls and look back down the valley.

2 - Monument Track to Craig's Hut (burnt out).

3 - Kings Hut.

There are several water crossings beyond Kings Hut area, so Snorkels or Blinds are advisable, there will be water possibly deep and flowing fast.

4 – Razorback Hut

5 – Bus Hut (burnt out)

6 – Refuge Mt No 3 Hut (burnt out)

7 – Tomahawk Gap and Tomahawk Hut

To Buttercup Road then Mansfield for a coffee, dinner if you like, definitely a wee, and then home.

Destination	WHROO HISTORIC RESERVE RUSHWORTH STATE FOREST
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Trip Leader	PAUL RYAN
Contact No	9807 5193 / 0438 121148
Date	QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY W/END FRI 7 TH TO MON 10 TH JUNE

Meeting Place:	Shell Service Station Cnr Hume Highway & Donnybrook Road
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Vehicle Limits	MIN/MAX: N/A
Grade	WET: Scenic DRY: Scenic

Equipment Required	Standard recovery.
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Approx Kms	200 kms
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Last Available Fuel	Petrol: Rushworth Diesel: Rushworth
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Maps Required	Nil
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Radio Channel	12
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Trip Activity Details:

We will be camping at Greens Campground which is part of Whroo Historic Reserve, details of which can be found at www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/1parkdisplay.cfm?park+214. Last time I was there (Cup weekend) there was one vehicle in the whole campground so I expect that it won't be too busy. The area is surrounded by Rusworth State Forest, Tahbilk and Mitchelton Wineries (among others), Waranga Basin, Lake Nagambie and the towns of Nagambie, Murchison and Rushworth. We may go into Rusworth for dinner on Saturday depending on how everyone feels. I am hoping to go for a drive on Sunday as I'm told there are one or two good tracks in Rusworth SF.

The weekend should be fairly relaxing and one in which participants can pretty much please themselves. As we are north of the divide it shouldn't too cold for the time of year.

Destination	GRAMPIANS
Trip Leader	BOB MCKERROW
Contact No	0430 014001
Date	FRIDAY 6 TH TO MONDAY 9 TH JUNE
Meeting Place:	Depart 2pm Shell/Maccas West Bound Western Ring Road
Vehicle Limits	MINIMUM: 2 MAXIMUM: 10
Pets	NO PETS
Grade	WET: Easy DRY: Easy
Approx Kms	300
Equipment Required	Standard recovery. Swags, tents, camper trailers, caravans, mobile homes. SENSE OF HUMOUR ESSENTIAL..
Last Available Fuel	Petrol: Stawell Diesel: Stawell
Maps Required	Trip leader has all maps as well as GPS and reasonable knowledge of area.
Radio Channel	12
Trip Activity Details:	Stay at The Plantation on Pine Road near Halls Gap – lovely place, toilets, running water etc. Visit Halls Gap, Cultural Centre. See Elephants Hide, Mackenzie Falls, Quarry where stone for Parliament House was quarried from. Lovely area.

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We encourage all members to purchase a Club Polo Shirt.

Email your order to committee@vfwdc.com.
Please ensure you advise size required.



Easter 2008 – Hattah Kulkyne NP

Participants:

Ashley & Lesley	GU Patrol
Anthony, Aline, Riley & Connor	GU Patrol
Paul, Maxine, Robert & Madeline	80 Series
Derek & Janet Hymas	Disco
John, Tina & Stephanie	GQ Patrol
Tim, Tim, Donna, Travis & Charlotte	60 Series
Brian	100 Series

Thursday

After a busy few months for Lesley and myself, we were looking forward to a relaxing weekend to recharge the batteries. We left home with the intention of catching Anthony on the Monash Freeway but with problems tyre pumps at several service stations I had to revert to using the *onboard* air. It was an uneventful drive through the city and we leisurely made our way along the highway keeping in touch with the Van Buitens via the phone. We eventually caught up with them when they stopped at Weddeburn for lunch. From there it was an easy trip to Hattah. We arrived at the camp site around 5.00ish - amazingly finding our way in without too much trouble. We were soon set up, wood cut and easing into our first beverage. Before getting too comfortable, we went out to put up some signs to assist with directions for the other participants, which of course saved us the problem of trying to find them – and our way back – in the dark. Derek and Jan, followed by Brian then John made their way in over the next few hours, and by then it was time to rest the head.

Good Friday

After a great night's sleep, we woke up to a bright and sunny day. The agenda for the days was mmm, let me see, *NOTHING*. The morning was spent wandering from camp to camp talking about all a matter of things (springs, winches, suspension etc). After lunch the Ryan and Axtel families arrived ready to set up camp. Unfortunately I wasn't there to see it, but Tim managed to get himself somewhat stuck in the sand. Like any recovery the most important thing is to make sure everything is ok, then comes the most critical part of the recovery. Well there wasn't any shortage of cameras to capture the moment.

After a little shovel work and selection of low range Tim managed to drive out. Before long they were set up – Paul, Max and the kids in their spanking new trailer – and it was time for a swim.



The rest of the day was spent relaxing – chatting, swimming, happy hour – all just too difficult to take , NOT!

It was Paul's Birthday and the evening was spent partaking in a few celebratory drinks around the fire – nothing new here but good to have an excuse for an extra few.

Saturday

Well we woke to another great day- a day when there were a few different things happening. The Van Buitens and Axtels were going into Mildura for a sightseeing day and a paddle steamer trip on the Murray, so they left camp mid morning. John, Tina and Stephanie also made their way into Mildura to potter around town for the day. The remaining group did much the same as the previous day, although I did manage to gather some motivation and go for a bike ride around the park for a few hours. When I returned the camp was quiet, a few people were pretending to read in the trailers but I'm sure this was code for an afternoon nana nap. Before taking a dip in the river, the afternoon duty of cutting timber for the evening fires was necessary – thankfully the wood was only a 30 meter walk from camp! After this, the river was begging and I obliged. Everyone eventually made their way back to camp and another enjoyable evening was had around the fires.

Sunday

Activity: a short trip to the local lakes. Some have visited the area on past trips but for some reason I always found relaxing around camp too appealing to join them. We headed out at around 10am and made our way to Lake Mournpall. A short walk through the trees and a very bad odour hit us (no it wasn't me). The lake had a severe case of blue-green algae making the air thick with a foul

pungent smell that was really unbearable (sounds familiar).

From here we made our way to the Hattah Information Centre, spending time to read the information about the Park and the floods over the years. We took a self guided tour around Hattah Lakes Nature Discovery which was beautifully narrated by Lesley.

Lunch was had at Hattah Lake which, considering the lack of rain in the region, still had some water in it.



We made our way back to camp arriving around 2.30pm.

As in past years, Sunday night was roast night, so once again the wood

collection crew were on hand to ensure there was plenty for everyone. Not long after this job was done, Mark Cameron (Michael's friends from Red Cliffs) arrived with two of his children, Natasha and Thomas. For some reason everyone gathered around our trailer for a chat and some pre-dinner drinks etc. While I didn't give much thought to this at the time some else's would have been better because after a couple of hours the stockpile of empties around our trailer was enough to support the local aluminum and glass smelters for several weeks (well, not quite). Mental note to myself, make sure Michael is along next time or casually make our way to some else's trailer before such a gathering. Mark eventually left with Tash nominated for driving duties.

The fires were roaring and roasts were being prepared. The gathering time had been set for 7pm and we weren't too far away from this with all sitting down together at 7.30pm.



Thankfully it was still daylight savings so there was plenty of light left to enjoy the meal. As you do when eating a roast the red wine was flowing, although a little too much for Derek and Jan who were heading home the next day. After the meal, everyone cleaned up and gathered back around the table for another evening of chit chat.

Monday

There were a few packing up and heading home today while others had the advantage of another day. Derek and Jan were the first to leave although the previous evening's festivities were still thumping on their heads. The Ryans and Axtels packed up at a leisurely pace leaving around midday. John and I felt energetic and took a bike ride in the afternoon. It was a very warm days and when we returned it was time for a much needed swim to cool us down. The camp just down from us were returning from fishing and advised that thunder storms and hail was on its way; it had hit Red Cliffs and was expected in 20 minutes. Thankfully we got nothing more than a light shower which cleaned in time to cook dinner. It was a very quiet and early night.

Tuesday

It was a gradual pack up for those who had decided to stay on til Tuesday, and by 10.30 everyone was ready to go. A quick last minute swim to refresh ourselves before we made the long drive home.

I must say this trip is one Lesley and look forward to every year for no other reason than to relax. I'm sure everyone who attended had much the same thoughts. Bring on next year.

Ashley

EASTER - MANSFIELD - TOP CROSSING

Trip Leader: Bob & Kath GU Nissan
Participants: Steven, Ken, Ben Toyota & Trailer
 Colin & Katie 80 Series

Good Friday

WOW! What a happy and interesting trip it was with lots of laughter and fun times.

We met up at Coldstream at the service station at 9.30am and had a get-to-know-you while watching the police in action. Departed at 9.45am.

Crossing the bridge at Bonnie Doon was an eye-opener with not a single drop of water to be seen. Next stop Mansfield, then via Whitfield Road to Powers Lookout Road where we enjoyed the view, had a lunch break and learned all about Powers teaching Ned Kelly how to escape the police BUT the police won in the end.

We left and turned right into a shortcut down the mountain only to find that out of sight around a bend was a locked gate! It was an interesting experience for all of us to watch them – and good experience for Bob and Steven –reverse back up the hill to the main road.

On we went, passing Cheshunt, stopped to look at Lake William Hovell, then on to our destination, passing through camping areas, creek crossings, and arriving at Top Crossing Track at 2.15pm.



We all picked out a camp site and set up, a hole was dug for the fire and rocks put around. Out came the chainsaws and axe. A big thick log lay nearby – but not for long.

On the way in Bob was explaining and showing Steven the tracks that that were a good drive so with that information Steven and Ben geared up and rode away til 4.45pm.

Time passed at camp, meals cooked and eaten, fire built up for the night ahead and daylight began to fade when one bike returned with Ben on it – very wet and told what had happened. Bob helped Ben connect the trailer onto Steven's 4X4 and checked all straps and a change of dry clothing, then Ben who had never driven this vehicle before – and with a trailer – drove off into the night.

Bob estimated the time that Ben would take to return to where Steven was and to load the bike, change and return – adding another hour to that, time ticked over and over and over so Bob said he better go and look for them, but waited a bit longer then jumped in his GU – fueled with oil waste from his local fish and chip shop – and disappeared up into the darkness of the mountain. Only to reappear 5 minutes later followed by Steven.

With drama over, the camp went back to normal with the boys cooking food and we all settling down for drinks and chats about what happened and what could have happened, but thankfully didn't. The moon was up, stars out, no mind or bugs or mozzies – a good night.

Saturday morning.

In all the years my son has been going camping this is the first time ever that everyone has been up, dressed and cooking breaky and Steven had to be woken up! "Oi, wake up Steve" Bob called, "I want to leave camp." So at 9.40am off we went through Stockyard Tk to Burnt Top Tk to Pineapple Flat camp and crossing the river behind a dead brain driving a dual cab doing 3-4ks full and kid in back.



Clearing tree on Burnt Track

He continued in the middle of the road until Bob who was leading squeezed past and he moved over. Off we went along Basin Rd then along King River. We passed King Hut on to Speculation Rd, Clearhills Tk to Craigs Hut where we had lunch and looked at the financial waste ! It was packed with visitors (arrived 1215 left 1345).



Along Circuit Rd Colin and Katie left us to return home and we went on to No 3 Rd. We stopped at Razorback Hut and stopped at Tomahawk. Oh, we were also on Buckland Spur Tk (I lost track with my notes here a little because of thick dust and Bob did a donut and had to wait for dust to clear because when he lost control he was on a bend – phew that was lucky!)

We headed back in the direction of camp, stopping on the way to cut firewood and while doing that is when I caught my foot under a tree root and fell hard, taking skin off my right foot and shin, right elbow – a scratch on right hand. Ha-ha look where to walk! Anyway, arriving back at camp it was roast night, so all the usual activities continued to the end of another day and night.

Sunday

Bob and Kath were staying until Monday, but we headed back home mainly because Steven had to do some jobs around the house and if he didn't do them he was worried Nicole would and he didn't want that to happen as she is over 5 months pregnant. So we packed up leaving at 11.40am and arriving home safely.

It is suggested that when attaching a trailer to a vehicle to always check that it's on the ball properly and chain is on; the chain saved the trailer.

I was doing my notes on the back of a Mobil petrol receipt. After it filled up I asked if anyone had any roll your own cigarette papers because I needed to continue my notes, so Bob gave me a pad that thick it will last for the next 12 months!

A big thank you to trip leader Bob for a terrific trip. Thoroughly enjoyed by all of us and looking forward to next time.

Ken Pitcher

Top Crossing Trip: Good Friday afternoon bike ride. Addendum to Trip Report by Ken Pitcher

My mate Ben and I headed away from camp, back up Top Crossing Track on our bikes, at around 5:30pm. We crossed through the King River three times from memory, all without incident. We then headed up Basin Track towards Mt View before turning off onto Long Spur Track. The idea was to do a bit of a circuit just to ease back into the swing of things. We covered a bit of hilly terrain, some with rocks, some with shale and few hair pin bends here and there. I came a cropper on one such bend, landing uphill with the bike facing downhill. It took a bit of a roll start to get moving again but after that we were on our way.

We soon came upon a really flat section along the side of Mount View where we were able to open 'em up a bit. It made for some very fun riding as we hit the whoop-dee-dos at pace. Soon after, we came upon a very steep downhill section as we made our way back towards the King River. This would be our 4th and final crossing before turning back in the direction of camp. We sized up the

crossing for a minute or so and then I carefully headed out, mindful of the steep exit on the other side. About half-way across, the water began to lap at my knees and was quickly approaching the exhaust before it happened... I hit a large rock under the surface of the water and the next thing I knew, I was taking a bath while still mounted on my bike. Apparently, the only thing that could be seen from the river's edge was the top of my handgrip. I quickly righted myself and the bike and then walked the rest of the way across.

Ben had a crack and a few bumps and knocks later, successfully completed the deep section of the crossing with exhaust fully submerged below the water. We were both wet from head to toe (me in particular) and had to push my bike up the steep exit as I had taken on water.

We tried for about an hour or so to start my bike and even though we did get it going after a while, it was still too wet to keep going. So Ben headed back to camp, hitched the trailer to the 'Cruiser and headed back to rescue me. Meanwhile, I made myself at home with some very hospitable campers who had set up along the rivers edge and warmed myself by their campfire over a cuppa.

When Ben returned with the trailer it was already dark. I found the trailer wiring dangling freely with the plug still in its socket. It turns out that between Ben and our fearless trip leader, they had forgotten to actually hitch the trailer coupling to the tow ball. When the trailer finally separated somewhere up the track, the handle on my fold-away jockey wheel got snapped off along with the wiring harness. Ah, the fun of it all...

Anyway, we loaded my bike on the trailer and a few twists and turns aside, we arrived back at camp somewhere around 9pm. I had expected that the old man, having spent the afternoon back at camp, would have had dinner ready for us by then but it turned out that he had managed to score a feed with Bob and Catherine. So instead of going with the roast that I had brought for that night, we chowed down a couple of hot dogs before calling it a night.

Steve Pitcher

Driver Training Weekend April 5-6 2008

<i>Participants:</i>	John Partridge	GQ Patrol
	Ian and Julie	GU Patrol
	Andy	GU Patrol
	Tony & Kelly	Prado
	Tim	GU Patrol
	Bruce	GU Patrol

Cape York beckons and we're going there this year. Why? Because we can. It will be a great adventure, but what if something goes wrong while we're up there? What if Ian gets sick or injured and I have to drive us out? There's always a Sat (satellite) phone, but the more practical solution is having a second driver with 4WD experience.

And so I found myself assembled with a group of eager 4WD learner drivers, some already more or less experienced, others complete novices (that's me !) on Wednesday 2nd April for an evening of tutoring in the art of four wheel driving.

We started with polite introductions which included the vehicles we drive and any modifications that had been made to the vehicles. My fellow trainees Andy, Tim, Tony and Bruce all proudly obliged, as did the three trainers, Johnno, Michael and Mark, and then there was me. Well, we have a Patrol, it's a '98 which I believe makes it a GU, it's a manual, we've had it for 2 months and the modifications so far are that we've had a cargo barrier and drawers installed ... with new tyres to follow before the weekend. Probably not quite the modifications the group was expecting, but that was the extent of my knowledge.

Discussion then covered the differences between 2WD, 4WD and All WD, turning circles/arcs, use of different tyre pressures, how and when to lock the hubs, the physics behind driving up and down hills, stopping and starting both uphill and downhill, what not to do when losing traction going downhill, how to drive on mud, sand, snow, rocks, ruts, logs and loose dirt tracks, and how to cross rivers. We also talked about safety and basic recovery gear including what you absolutely must have and what you can manage without. By the end of the evening I felt overloaded with information but we were all ready and eager (the boys were eager, I was apprehensive) for the weekend of practical training. Just remember the 7 Ps of four wheel driving: Prior Planning and Preparation Prevents Pathetically Poor Performance!

On Saturday 5th April Ian and I set off at some ungodly hour of the morning to meet the group at Little O'Toole's Camping Ground somewhere in the Thomson State Forest (past the Thomson Dam). Before we hit the freeway we swapped drivers, and I had my first turn at the wheel of the car I would be driving for the weekend. That's right - I hadn't even driven the car before then. Travelling on the bitumen was easy - I even had to back off the speed a few times on the freeway - but when we turned off onto Merringtons Track, I started wondering what on earth I had got myself into. The track was narrow, no room for passing, and very windy with a loose rocky surface. I was not having fun.

It was on that track that I wondered if any trainee driver had ever refused point blank to take one of the tracks as instructed by the trainer. Would I be the first? But what's the point of that? Should have stayed home if that was my attitude. So I pushed that thought out of my mind and pressed on.

At Merringtons Camping Ground we swapped drivers again so Ian took us in the rest of the way. We eventually found Lt O'Toole's where the rest of the group (Johnno, Andy, Tim, Bruce, Tony and Tony's wife Kelly) were relaxing around the campfire with their morning coffee. We joined in and revised

our learnings from the Wednesday theory session before inspecting everyone's vehicles to discuss tyres, recovery points, winches, miscellaneous modifications and more.

The first practical exercise of the day was the demonstration of the use of the snatch strap. It was attached to Andy's car ... behind mine. Now the theory of 'snatch' is fine, but I wasn't confident, so when Johnno instructed me to take off at a fast walking pace, I adopted the gently, gently approach instead. Wrong! Consequently I didn't exactly achieve the 'snatch' effect (it was more of a polite tug) but I did manage to get Andy's car moving so all was not lost, and I did find out where Ian stores all the recovery stuff in the car. I just need to work on the 'snatch' aspect some more.

Next was the key stop / key start technique going uphill. The stall part of the stop was a cinch, the start bit was OK, but it's really unnerving reversing down a hill with a bend in it and big trees on each side while only using mirrors and not turning around to look ... which would be the natural thing to do. After three tries it was finally someone else's turn and I was relieved to be out of the car watching instead of driving. I think I was the only one who had three goes, but practice makes perfect!

We had a quick lunch then set off for the afternoon drive. I remember the final instruction before we left was to try to keep to about 2000rpm and let the car do the work. What does that mean?

Only a couple of minutes out of camp we struck our first uphill track. **Oh my God**, you've got to be joking. **Up there?** Are you mad? **Do I have to ???** Oh (swear word), OK, just do it. Right, here we go!!! So up we went.

I hit the accelerator to get a good start ... 'cos that's what you usually do when approaching a hill (on bitumen anyway). Wrong! Too fast, ease off, no - too slow, speed up, jolt forward, accelerate, not too much, 3000rpm, too much - ease off, steer, accelerate, jolt again, hoop-de-do, follow Johnno's tracks, what tracks, I can't see any tracks, accelerate, jolt, 3000rpm (engine screams), ease off, too slow, accelerate, hoop-de-do, watch the branch on the left, what branch, there's one on the right, no - left side, no - both sides, squeeze through, don't scratch the car, too slow, keep it moving, accelerate, 3000rpm, engine screams louder, jolt, hoop-de-do, steer, jolt, accelerate, jolt, ease off, breathe, corner coming, where, it's a hairpin, go wide, stay right, don't turn yet, take it easy, not yet, wait for it, now - turn now, keep turning, can't see the front of the car, can't see the track, where's the track, where's the edge, can't see, stay right, don't hit the rock wall, don't go left (big drop), straighten up, breathe. But wait, there's still more track! We're not at the top yet? What! You're kidding! And breathe, remember to breathe!

That was the first hill of many. Flats Track, apparently. Well I can assure you it had nothing whatsoever to do with anything remotely resembling flat!! Quite the opposite in fact. And Ian says we

were closer to 4000rpm at times (no wonder the engine was screaming) and I was supposed to be staying close to 2000rpm ? How ???

After a few more hills I eventually worked out that the car will go forwards in low range first gear without using the accelerator. So that's what Johnno meant by letting the car do the work. At this point keeping to around 2000rpm became a possibility and after some more ascents, it was a reality. Finally I was starting to get the hang of it. While I was coming to grips with this fundamental concept, some of our more intrepid trainees attempted a harder track. Naturally I took the 'chicken' option (no need to push our luck) and then watched as man and mechanical beast tried to conquer the uphill climb. And conquer they did. The boys were pretty happy with themselves ... and rightly so - it was a great effort.

The afternoon drive continued with more tracks up hill and down dale. It was very tiring, but fortunately we had to stop to clear some trees from the tracks, so I could have a bit of a break. It was a welcome relief from the driving ... the first couple of times, but the novelty soon wore off as our drive became punctuated quite frequently by the necessity to stop and clear trees.



Of course we then had the opportunity to practise our key stop / key start technique. Sometimes we managed to clear the trees by hand but mostly we required the use of a chainsaw. (Now I know why a chainsaw is a required accessory.) We lost count of the number of times we stopped to clear trees on the Saturday afternoon ... and there was more clearing to be done on Sunday. Put it this way - we cleared so many trees that we ran out of fuel in two chainsaws and had to refuel from a third chainsaw that wasn't working. Some of us believe that the ranger gave us the key to the camping ground on condition that we clear certain tracks for him ! I hope the ranger remembers to mail our 'Tree Clearing 101' certificates, 'cos I'm sure we passed that course several times over.



We returned to camp late in the day ... again along Flats Track but by now it wasn't anywhere near as scary as earlier in the day. A little bit of experience, confidence and a couple of hours of practice can go a long way ... and of course we were now heading downhill which definitely helps.

Dinner was followed by the usual banter around the campfire, which allegedly became a bonfire after I retired. Apparently someone (I won't name names) decided we shouldn't leave any of our firewood unused and wanted to burn it all. The weather was quite cool that night, but not around the campfire ! Burning hot, in fact - just ask Bruce and Johnno !!!

We had a leisurely start on Sunday morning. It was so peaceful there we could have stayed longer, but there was more driving to do. What ? So I have to keep driving on those one-vehicle-at-a-time tracks with nowhere for error for a few more hours ? OK, if I must.

We hit the tracks around mid to late morning, depending on whether or not you were still on Daylight Savings Time or had remembered to change the watches back an hour. Some of the tracks (but certainly not all) on Sunday actually were a bit wider, straighter and flatter than on Saturday and we were able to get up some speed. I even got into 4th gear several times !!! And I also started taking the hills in 2nd gear, and the hills that I hit in 1st gear I actually could have done in 2nd gear. The weekend was about learning and that's what I was doing.

Then there was that very steep decline. Again 'Oh my God, you're joking' came to mind, but Johnno was already on the track - he wasn't joking. The call came back on the radio - 'Nice and easy, everyone. Julie, you might want to take this one in 1st gear'. I replied 'No problem, Johnno, I already was' (in 1st gear), and from what I could see, I had no intention of getting into 2nd until we were at the bottom !

After lunch on Sunday we tackled the river crossing. OK, so it was more of a creek. Actually, it wasn't too tricky and we all got through it quite effortlessly ... even me ! Well, I was impressed.

By now time was getting on so we headed back to the Thomson Dam. There we farewelled Andy, Tony and Kelly who turned for home, while Johnno took the rest of the group (Tim, Bruce and us) down to

Coopers Creek near Walhalla for a deeper river crossing.

Again this was more of a creek than a river but it was flowing. There was also another 4WD already crossing the creek, so we studied his line and speed before having a go ourselves. And it wasn't that bad. In first gear I took to the water and almost immediately felt the pull of the current, not that it was strong or dangerous, just definitely noticeable. Got out the other side OK and then there was another smaller crossing so we did that one, too. Easy – I think I'm getting the hang of this now. On the return crossing I even announced to Ian that you need to be in 2nd gear for these crossings, just so you have enough power and speed to keep moving steadily – 1st gear is too slow. How's that for progress ... and confidence !

The Coopers Creek crossing concluded our training weekend. Back on dry ground our remaining drivers Johnno, Tim, Bruce ... and Ian (I eagerly reverted to passenger status at that point) unlocked hubs and re-inflated tyres. We said our good-byes and headed for home.

It had been a great weekend although I was happy it was over – I was exhausted. Nevertheless I'm glad that I'd taken the challenge and feel confident I can assist with the 4WD aspects of our upcoming Cape York trip ... if called on to do so. I must say I perfected my stall/stop technique – it's easy, you just forget there's something called a clutch, and then brake. I progressed from blatant fear at the start of the weekend to cautious confidence, ... and the engine no longer screams through over-revving. So I was happy with my achievement.

Thank-you to Johnno, Michael Rodger and Mark Kochan for the informative theory evening – it set the scene for what was to come on the weekend, and I think we were well prepared as a result. Many thanks also to Johnno for leading us on the weekend and for his patience and encouragement throughout the training exercises.

I must also thank my other half, Ian, for accompanying me in the vehicle during the driving exercises, which apparently is usually not the done thing on training weekends, and for his calm and reassuring manner while coaching my driving efforts. I appreciate his support ... and the fact that he didn't panic, even when we got close to the drop on his side. Of course I couldn't see if his knuckles were white or not as I was too busy watching what I was doing. But yes, we survived the weekend with marriage intact despite being in the same vehicle. Now I can't say the driving experience did anything to change my attitude towards four wheel driving – it is still most definitely a 'boy thing'. I won't be taking up four wheel driving as a hobby any time soon ... or probably never, but I'm glad I've had a go and achieved something I didn't know I could do, so my weekend away certainly was worthwhile. By the way, I'm still taking a Sat phone to Cape York ... just in case !

Julie Webber

Club Photo Sharing

A new Club account has been set up with *Photobucket* for Club photos and videos from trips you would like to share with other members.

This is a free service and one that will benefit all members to view the great places we visit and the adventures along the way. As this site may be accessed by all members and their families, please respect them and only post appropriate material.

For security reasons and to protect the site from inappropriate material, we will be providing the password upon request.

This is a great initiative and hope you use it to full advantage.

For further details and access details please contact John Partridge.



For those who are unaware there is a 4 Wheel Drive show on Channel 31 that highlights and promotes the benefits of responsible 4 wheeling and community activities conducted by Clubs.

They also venture out into different parts of the State showing what areas have to offer.

If you haven't seen this program, tune in or visit their website.

**Going
4WD**
7.30 pm
Sundays



[Http://going4wd.com/](http://going4wd.com/)