

FEBRUARY 2010

Free Wheeling



Jacksons Crossing during the Xmas trip to McKillop's Bridge

Notice Board



VFWDC GENERAL MEETING VENUE

The Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club meet at the Blue & Gold Room, Noble Park Football Club, 46-56 Moodemere Street, Noble Park on the first Wednesday of each month (excluding January) from 8.00pm. The Blue & Gold Room can be found up the stairs at the rear of the Bistro.

Members and Guests are welcome to dine at the Bistro before attending the meeting.

First WEDNESDAY of each month 8.00PM Start

Venue:

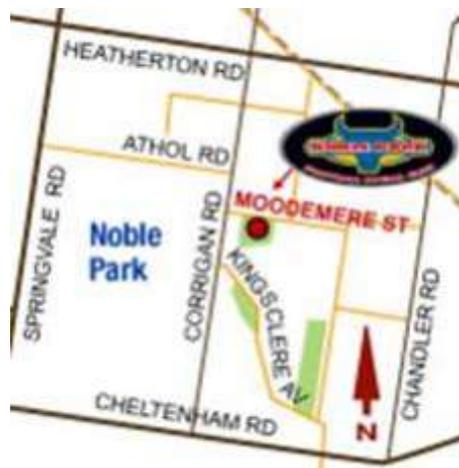
Upstairs Meeting room (Above the Bistro)

Noble Park Football Club

46-56 Moodemere Street

Noble Park

Melways ref: 89 D4



FREE WHEELING

Hello and welcome to another year. In this edition we have a trip report from multiple writers about the big new years trip to McKillop's Bridge, and a stack of new trips to look at. This month's newsletter is a bit late getting out the door. I'll blame it on the holidays!

Cheers,

Shane Michelon



COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT 2009-2010

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| President | Ashley Martin | president@vfwdc.com 0438 600 904 |
| Vice President | Mark Kochan | vicepres@vfwdc.com 0412 544 668 |
| Treasurer | Phil Griffith | treasurer@vfwdc.com 0419 865 472 |
| Secretary | Paul Ryan | secretary@vfwdc.com 0438 121 148 |
| GENERAL COMMITTEE | | |
| Assistant Secretary | Bruce Cremonesi | assist@vfwdc.com |
| Trip Co-ordinator | Daniel Robinson | trips@vfwdc.com |
| Newsletter Editor | Shane Michelon | editor@vfwdc.com |
| Association Delegate | John Partridge | |
| Training Officers | Ashley Martin | John Partridge |
| | Michael Rodger | Mark Kochan |
| New Member Contact | George Pledger | |
| Web Manager | Paul Ryan | web@vfwdc.com |

Club Details

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Registered Name | Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club Inc |
| Registration No | A002184F |
| Correspondence | PO Box 778 Dandenong Vic 3174 |
| Email | secretary@vfwdc.com |
| Website | www.vfwdc.com |
| Meetings | Held 8pm, first Wednesday of each month, excluding January (no meeting). |
| Location | Noble Park Football Club 46-56 Moodemere Street Noble Park Melways ref: 89 D4 |
| Newsletter | All articles and photographs to be submitted prior to 20 th of each month to editor@vfwdc.com |
| Front Cover | Photograph courtesy of : Phil Griffith |
| | The Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club is an affiliated club of the Victoria Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs Inc (VAFWDC) |

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of *Free Wheeling*.

Welcome back to all the members for another year of four wheeling, camping and socialising. I certainly hope your festive season and holiday period was enjoyable, safe, and **you're ready to tackle the new year refreshed.**

As you will see in the calendar, the year starts off with a fantastic range of trips that cater for everyone. One particular trip which should interest everyone is the March long weekend. As the Club membership has changed over the past few years we would like to use this trip for longer serving and recent members to come along and put faces to the names. The weekend will consist of a variety of activities which are outlined in the trip data form. With easy access to the camping area, it is suitable for all forms of camping including caravans. I look forward to seeing as many members as possible on this trip.

Bruce has the task of organising guest speakers throughout the year and the first one is scheduled for March. We have a representative from the Royal Flying Doctor Service who will discuss the operations and other related areas of the organisation. From all accounts this information night will be well worth attending, and should be very informative particularly for those planning to travel outback. We will conduct the monthly raffle with great prizes on offer and all proceeds will be donated to RFDS. Keep an eye out for notices of more guest speakers which will be published in the newsletter.

One thing the Club has never been stringent about is departure times when running a day trip from base camp or departing the camping area. While this may not seem too important to some, the time lost during the morning can make for a delayed return or meeting of other members/family who may be attending the trip. The trip leader has to notify participants the evening prior to leaving, and it is then the responsibility of all participants to be ready by the nominated departure time. If this means packing away items the night before or getting up earlier to be ready by the target time, this is your responsibility. Please ensure **you follow the trip leader's wishes and be ready.**

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

Ashley Martin
President

Minutes of General Meeting – 2 December 2009

General Meeting December 2009

The meeting was held at the Blue & Gold Room, Noble Park Football Club and was opened at 8.00pm by President Ashley Martin.

Present: There were 33 members present as per the attendance book

Apologies: Maxine Ryan, Lesley Peters, John Wimetal, Michael Harris, Ken Beard, Paula Johnston, Michael & Verylle Rodger, Tina Martini

Visitors: Daniel

Minutes of previous Meeting

Accepted : Shane Michelon
Seconded : Nick Johnson

Matters arising: Nil

Correspondence in

Overland Cruising - November 2009
LROCV Newsletter - November 2009
RFDS Newsletter
Audit invoice & Letter of engagement from Debra Pink
Noble Park Football Club Invoice for meeting room
Cashflow Manager subscription
Trackwatch
Wandin Vic 4WD sho information pack

Correspondence out

Newsletter

Treasurers report

| | |
|--------------|------------|
| Term Deposit | \$5,104.08 |
| Cash | \$3964.79 |
| Petty Cash | \$50.00 |
| Money In | \$190.00 |
| Moneys Out | \$0.00 |
| Balance | \$9,308.87 |

Accepted: Tim Axtell
2nd: Anthony Van Buiten

Trip reports

A Grade Trip - John Partridge gave the trip report for the A Grade trip. Despite our best intentions we only ended up driving two tracks due to mechanical issues. We **camped at Sennini's on the first night and drove Lady Mannor Sutton South on the Saturday.** This track was on the proposed works program but it looks like the work has gone ahead anyway. On Saturday we camped not far from Andersons campground on a spot by the river and on Sunday we drove Spud Spur track which was interesting. More mechanical drama meant that we had to call it a day and head home early. Still an enjoyable weekend away nonetheless.

Mystery Pub to Pub - John McNeill gave the trip report for the pub to pub. John and Marianne were given the envelope with all the details on Friday and promptly threw **it in the back of the car not realizing they'd probably need it.** They only worked out that they may need to take notes when they saw everyone else writing things down. Anyway they had a fantastic time and spent Saturday night at a school camp not far from the Nissan **club's property. They would recommend the trip to anyone.** Congratulations to David and Rosalie for running another great trip.

Bunyip Day Trip - the group met early at Longwarry services and headed up **Robertson's Creek track towards a logging coup.** The track had been dozed and there were some huge whoop-de-do's **cut into the track. The continued along Quartz track to Bunyip River road then on up to Gentle Annie which luckily was dry.** They had lunch at Bunyip River road and then tackled Andersons which was also dry. The day was finished off with ice creams at Gembrook before the trip home.

Fishing Trip - Anthony gave the report for the fishing trip which he started by going to the wrong camp ground on Friday night. They got up early on Saturday, rang home to find out where they should be and met the rest of the group later that morning. On the whole the weather was good despite some heavy rain on Saturday night. Some tried fishing but gave up quite quickly. Some other brave souls went for a 12 km hike up to one of the huts above 8 mile flat. The hut was in fantastic shape (probably **because you can't get to it in a vehicle).** **Sunday was a wet** pack up however a downpour on the way home helped clean vehicles.

Trip coordinators report

The various trip leaders gave a brief overview of the following upcoming trips.

(Continued on page 5)

| Type | When | Where | Trip Leader |
|---------------|---------------|---|-----------------|
| Day Trip | 6/12/09 | Strickland Spur (Postponed) | Paul Ryan |
| Day Trip | 12/12/09 | Xmas Tree Delivery | Ashley Martin |
| Multi Day | 26/12/09 | McKillop's Bridge. This trip is full. | Ken Beard |
| Multi Day | 26/12/09 | McKillop's Bridge - for anyone who else who wants to go to this area over new year. Camping a little closer to the bridge. | Bob McKerron |
| Multi Day | 22/01/10 | TBD | Ashley Martin |
| Week end | 6/02/10 | Avoca | Paul Ryan |
| Evening | 10/02/10 | Driver Training Theory - Notting Hill | John Partridge |
| Week end | 13/02/10 | Driver Training - Practical | John Partridge |
| Day | 21/02/10 | Vic 4WD Show - Wandin | LROCV |
| Day | Late Feb 10 | TBD | Ashley Martin |
| Long Week end | 7/03/10 | Labour Day Weekend - Knockwood | Dan Robinson |
| Week end | 12/03/10 | Advance Training | John Partridge |
| Long Week end | 2/04/10 | Robe - Easter | Bruce Cremonesi |
| Week end | Late April 10 | Mines Explorer - Aberfeldy | John Partridge |

Event Coordinators Report

The Christmas Party is scheduled for Sunday 6th December 2009 at Myuna Farm. BYO meat and drink. The club will provide salads, bread and drinks for the kids. Details as per the newsletter.

Association Report

The DSE are running a survey regarding Trail Bike Riding and want to ensure that the interests of trail bike riders are balanced with the needs of other recreational users. New 4WD mud map available for the Beachport - Nora Creina by the Wattle Rangers 4WD Club is available to download from the website. www.fwdvictoria.org.au
Illegal activity in the Alpine National Park over the

Queens Birthday weekend
Extended track closures in the Tarago State Forrest Inc. Lower Sisters, Phasmid, Walker, Darcy and Spion Kopje tracks
VFWDC have had some input regarding the proposed permanent closure of Abbotts Creek Track.
VFWDC has had input regarding the Proposed Summer Works Program and the fact the tracks had already been graded whilst the program was still open.
Beware that Mt Disappointment SF is still closed from the fires and to be re-opened sometime next year

General business

Vic 4wd show Wandin - we are going to have a stand at the 4WD show next year comprising one of the members vehicles, photo boards, information etc. We will need volunteers to help man the stand during the day. Please note that if you intend to drive on the test track this year then you will need written permission from the club. **Letter will be available from the club stand (Secretary's Note** - we have subsequently cancelled our stand, if you want to drive the test track then please contact me on 0401 014631 and I will arrange a permission letter to be sent to you).

Guest Speakers - We hope to have a guest speaker from the RFDS at the March meeting.

Recovery points - John is preparing an article for the newsletter regarding recovery points following the death of a family member in Tasmania recently. In the meantime can members please ensure they have a rated recovery point on their vehicle if you are attending a trip.

Other Business

Nil

Raffle Tickets sold by Emily and Kaz.

1st Prize - Tyre repair kit won by Nick Johnson.

2nd Prize - Wine won by Tim Axtell.

3rd Prize - Frying pan won by John McNeill.

4th, 5th, 6th prizes - Eggs won by Sally Harris, Phil Griffith, Shane McNeil.

Meeting Closed: 9.30pm

Next Meeting: Wednesday 3rd of February at Noble Park Football Club.

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*Anyone wishing to advertise in the Club Directory,
 contact the Editor at editor@vfwdc.com*



CLUB MERCHANDISE
For Sale

(Revised Price List)

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Club Polo Shirts | \$28.00 ea |
| Club Polar Fleece ½ Zip Jumper | \$38.00 ea |
| Club Polar Fleece Full Zip Jacket | \$48.00 ea |
| Club Sleeveless Reversible Vest | \$44.00 ea |
| Club Caps | \$15.00 ea |
| Club Bucket Hat | \$16.00 ea |
| Club Wide Brim Hat | \$18.00 ea |
| Club Beanie | \$12.00 ea |
| VFWDC Sticker (long) | \$ 6.00 ea |

We encourage all members to purchase a Club Polo Shirt.

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



Minister for Housing

50 Lonsdale Street
GPO Box 4057
Melbourne Victoria 3001
DN210081
www.dhs.vic.gov.au
Telephone: (03) 9096 7722
Facsimile: (03) 9096 9225

e1756744

Mr Ron Reed

Dear Mr Reed

I am writing to formally thank you and the many members of the Four Wheel Drive Clubs throughout Victoria who participated in the collection and transportation of caravans for the survivors of the February 2009 bushfires.

It has been a challenging time for all concerned during the recovery effort and the contribution of you and your colleagues has been nothing short of magnificent.

The organisation of the caravan transportation effort would not have occurred as smoothly without your personal and tireless organisational work, as well as the generous contribution of time and vehicles by the participating club members.

As was informally agreed some months ago, the collective Four Wheel Drive Clubs organisational effort was wound down at the end of September 2009. With your personal assistance the Office of Housing has established an ongoing and well functioning arrangement.

Once again on behalf of the Victorian Government please convey my thanks to all your colleagues who participated so generously in the recovery response.

~~Yours sincerely~~

Sincere thanks

RICHARD WYNNE MP
Minister for Housing

8/12/2009





CLUB CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

| 2010 | | | | |
|----------|--------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------|
| February | Wednesday 3rd | General Meeting | Ashley Martin | 0438 600 904 |
| | Sat-Sun 6-7 | Avoca/St Arnaud | Paul Ryan | 0438 121148 |
| | Wed 10th Feb 2010 | Driver Training Theory | John Partridge | 0428 331 211 |
| | Sat–Sun 13-14 | Driver Training Practical | John Partridge | 0428 331 211 |
| | Sunday 21st | Vic 4WD Show | | |
| March | Wednesday 3rd | General Meeting | Ashley Martin | 0438 600 904 |
| | 5th–8th | Labour Day Knockwood | Dan Robinson | 0407 334 169 |
| | Friday 12 Mar 2010 | Advanced Driver Training | John Partridge | 0428 331 211 |
| | Tuesday, 29/06/10 | Trip–North Simpson Desert - Madigan Line | Ken Beard & Jane Spence | 5971 4683 |
| April | Wednesday 7th | General Meeting | Ashley Martin | 0438 600 904 |
| | 1st to 5th | Beachport & Robe | Dan Robinson / Bruce Cremonisi | 0407 334 169 |
| | 18th | Day Trip Marysville / Rubicon | Bruce Cremonesi | |
| | | | | |
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UPCOMING TRIPS

| | |
|--|---|
| DESTINATION | Avoca |
| LEADER/CONTACT NO. | NAME: Paul Ryan TEL: 0401 014631 MOB: 0401 014631 |
| DATE | 5 th to 7 th February 2010 |
| MEETING PLACE / TIME | 6.00pm Friday 5 th Feb, Todd Road Services, Westgate Freeway |
| GRADE Please adhere to new trip classifications | WET: Easy DRY: Easy |
| TRIP ACTIVITY DETAILS | |
| <p>This is going to primarily be a camping trip staying at the old Glenpatrick footy oval which we have used before. This is a nice campground with a shelter and flushing toilets. We will probably go for a drive on Saturday around the Pyrenees State Forest although many of the tracks in this area had been dozed last time we were there. As a result we may look further afield and see what St Arnaud / Redbank SF has to offer.</p> | |
| VEHICLE LIMITS | 2—8 |
| APPROX KMS <small>Meeting place to destination</small> | 170kms |
| LAST AVAILABLE FUEL | Avoca |
| DISTANCE BETWEEN SUPPLIES | |
| EQUIPMENT REQUIRED | Basic Recovery Equipment |
| MAPS REQUIRED | VICMAPS 208_Amphitheatre, 209_Barkly |
| RADIO CHANNEL UHF | 12 |

| | |
|---|---|
| DESTINATION | Proficiency Training—Aberfeldy Forest area |
| LEADER/CONTACT NO. | John Partridge 0428 331 211 |
| DATE | Theory: Wed 10 Feb 2010 8.00PM Practical: Sat 13 & Sun 14th Feb |
| MEETING PLACE TIME | TBC |
| GRADE | WET: Medium DRY: Medium |
| TRIP ACTIVITY DETAILS | |
| <p>This is a must do trip for any new club member or one who hasn't attended a training weekend in the past. We will be covering many of the basic aspects of 4WDing covering a varied terrain including steep rocky tracks & river crossings.</p> <p>There will be something for everyone in this trip for new and old. The latest and most up to date recovery techniques will be discussed and tested. Discussions on vehicle setup, recovery gear, the Tread Lightly! Principles and more.</p> | |
| VEHICLE LIMITS | MINIMUM: 4 MAXIMUM: 8 |
| LAST FUEL | PETROL: Moe DIESEL: Moe |
| EQUIPMENT REQUIRED | Standard recovery equipment. You will need to be self sufficient with all your camping needs. Bring your own water. |
| RADIO CHANNEL | 12 |

| | |
|---|--|
| DESTINATION | Woods Point Surrounds (Knockwood) |
| LEADER/ CONTACT NO. | NAME: Dan Robinson TEL: 0407 334 169 MOB: 0407 334 169 |
| DATE | 5 th to 8 th March 2010 (Come on the 6 th if you cant get the 5 th off) |
| MEETING PLACE / TIME | 8:30am Lilydale Service Lane Opposite Maccas OR at Knockwood Reserve, Mans- field-Woods Point Road (About 10k's past Kevington) |
| GRADE | WET: Easy/Medium + DRY: Easy |
| TRIP ACTIVITY DETAILS | |
| <p>This trip is an all in trip & there is no limit on numbers, there will be Day drives, ½ day drives & if we get participants maybe even a night drive. This is a fantastic opportunity for new trip leaders & new members to join in on a trip. If the new trip leaders are confident we can set them up for a trip to run with assistance & full trip details. There are loads of tracks & things too see, including old mining equipment, mines & fantastic tracks. We hope to get multiple trips per day to different destinations. So the more the merrier.</p> | |
| VEHICLE LIMITS | MINIMUM: 2 MAXIMUM: Unlimited as long as we can find people who are willing to lead a trip. |
| APPROX KMS | 170kms |
| LAST AVAILABLE FUEL | PETROL: Mansfield/Jamieson DIESEL: Mansfield/Jamieson |
| EQUIPMENT | Basic Recovery Equipment |
| MAPS REQUIRED | |
| RADIO | 12 |

| | |
|--|--|
| DESTINATION | Advanced Driver Training– Walhalla |
| LEADER/CONTACT NO. | John Partridge 0428 331 211 |
| DATE | Friday 12th March 2010 Sunday 14th March 2010 |
| MEETING PLACE / TIME | Longwarry service center 6.30pm |
| GRADE Please adhere to new trip classifi- cations | WET: Medium - Hard DRY: Medium-Hard |
| TRIP ACTIVITY DETAILS | |
| <p>Want to take the next step from the proficiency training and learn more on how to tackle the harder tracks and vehicle recovery. Well this is your opportunity to learn in a safe environment.</p> <p>We will be focusing on full vehicle recovery using winch recovery equipment and the associated techniques along with how to tackle those harder tracks. We will walk the tracks, talk about what to look out for and the best lines to take followed by driving them using several different scenarios.</p> <p>For those who may have been attended a previous advanced training course and want to brush up on your skills are also welcome along.</p> <p>Participants will be assessed to determine sufficient experience and vehicle capability for this trip.</p> | |
| VEHICLE LIMITS | MINIMUM: 3 MAXIMUM: 10 |
| APPROX KMS Meeting place to destination | 150 |
| LAST AVAILABLE FUEL | PETROL: Moe DIESEL: Moe |
| DISTANCE BE- TWEEN SUPPLIES | N/A |
| EQUIPMENT RE- QUIRED | Full Recovery Equipment |
| MAPS REQUIRED | N/A |
| RADIO CHANNEL CB / UHF | 12 |

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| DESTINATION | Beachport & the beaches of Robe SA |
| LEADER/ CONTACT NO. | NAME: Dan Robinson/Bruce Cremonesi TEL: 0407 334 169 MOB: 0407 334 169 |
| DATE | Thursday 1st to 5 th April 2010 |
| MEETING PLACE / TIME | Mc Donalds Western Ring Rd, Sunshine West |
| GRADE | WET: Easy DRY: Easy/Medium |
| TRIP ACTIVITY DETAILS | We will be staying in a caravan park in Beachport & touring the beaches in the area. There is plenty to see up to Robe & down to Carpenters Rocks. |
| VEHICLE LIMITS | MINIMUM: 2 MAXIMUM: 8. |
| APPROX KMS | 500kms |
| LAST AVAILABLE FUEL | PETROL: Robe DIESEL: Robe |
| SUPPLIES | Beachport has all supplies needed. |
| EQUIPMENT RE- QUIRED | Basic Recovery Equipment, especially a snatch strap. |
| RADIO | 12 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Destination | (Expression of interest) North Simpson Desert - Madigan Line |
| Trip Leader | Ken Beard & Jane Spence |
| Contact No | 5971 4683 |
| Date | Tuesday, 29/06/10 (depart Copley, SA) to Birdsville, QLD (Approx 10-14 days later) |
| Meeting Time/ Place | Copley Caravan Park, S.A. |
| Vehicle Limits | MIN: 2, MAX: 4 (Diesel Only) |
| Grade | WET/DRY: Difficult |
| Approx Kms | Approx 800kms, Mt Dare to Birdsville. |
| Last Available Fuel | PETROL: N/A DIESEL: Mt Dare |
| Distance Be- tween Supplies | 260 litres diesel required for 6 cylinder. Detours/Deviations may be required. |
| Equipment Re- quired | Desert experience necessary. Vehicle must be in A1 condition. 2x spare tyres/4 tubes. Other specified equipment in detail later on. |
| Radio Channel | 12 |
| <p>Trip Activity Details: Following Dr Cecil Madigan's 1939 track from Old Andado to Birdsville. THIS IS VERY REMOTE & ISOLATED COUNTRY, MUST BE PREPARED FOR ISOLATION AND IN THE EVENT OF BREAKDOWN VEHICLE RECOVERY MAY BE AN ISSUE DOLLAR WISE Commitment by Feb 2010 - Permits required</p> | |



McKillops Bridge, Snowy River

26 December 2009 - 2 January 2010

Trip Leaders:

Ken, Jane, Jess and Jack

Participants

Ashley and Lesley
 Anthony, Aline, Riley and Connor
 Maggie
 Michael, Verylle, Liberty, Elizabeth and Zoe
 Brian
 John and Tina
 Derek & Janet

Reports

26, 27, 28 and 31 by Derek Hymas
 29th by Anthony
 30th by Ashley

Saturday, 26 December

It was an early start. The trip leader had set a meeting time early enough for us to see the sun rise - 6.00am at the BP Service station in Longwarry. Derek & Janet arrived first (but still ended up doing the trip report for the day) and within five minutes, Ken and Jane and the boys and Brian had all arrived.

The journey to McKillops Bridge was not without incident. The first was when we stopped for morning tea at Bairnsdale, although it felt more like lunch after the early start. Derek and Janet went off to the toilet. Derek took the shorter path, arrived first, laughed at Janet for arriving after him and promptly walked into the Ladies. Fortunately for him, Janet was the next Lady to arrive and was able to chase him out without further embarrassment.

Just after Bruthen, a smell of burning brakes came into **Derek's car. The brakes on Ken's trailer had seized. We** pulled over and a quick fix by Ken and Brian soon released them and we were on our way again.

The road into McKillops Bridge is narrow and hugs a steep **hillside. The views are spectacular but you don't really** want to look down. We turned off on to Little River Track and made our way down a steep descent into the camping ground where we found Ashley and Lesley waiting for us. They had arrived the day before. We picked our spots

and set up camp.

Ken and Jane set up their trailer inside some bollards. Derek and Janet took a look inside as well, but had a conversation with another camper who had arrived just before us. The camper, who seemed a bit put out that several people had turned up and that more were on the **way, advised "those bollards were put there for a reason". After a bit of thought and considering the ranger** had told Ashley and Lesley the same thing the previous day, they decided to set up camp outside them instead. Ashley helped with setting up as they had borrowed **Paul and Maxine Ryan's camper-trailer** and were setting it up for the first time.

Later in the day, Anthony, Aline, Riley and Connor arrived.

Happy Hour was notable for its unusual topics of conversation. Unusual for a 4WD Club, that is. Included were supermarket shopping and checkout experiences, the pronunciation of places some of us had visited (e.g. Cervantes, Cape Leveque), toilet paper quality and dishwasher stacking protocols (apparently you must never stack a bowl against a plate; dishes must be rinsed before stacking - unless your name is Jane).

Eventually, it became too much for Ashley and he went off to speak to Ken about diff locks. Lesley thought he **had said "dips locks" presumably thinking he meant a** mechanism for locking the lids of pre-dinner snacks before everyone became too full.

That set the tone for the evening. I think everyone was a bit tired. Certainly, that night we were all in bed quite early. In fact, we were early to bed every night throughout the week.

Sunday, 27 December

It was a quiet day. In the morning, Ken, Jane, Jess and Jack went down to the river; the others sat around reading or chatting; Bob McKerrow, who was camping at McKillops Bridge looked in on his way through; Ken went off at some point to rewind his winch; Brian enjoyed the peace and quiet at his end of the camp; Ashley went off on a bike ride to McKillops Bridge sporting some space-age bike clothes; a few cars with people looking for camping spots came and went.

Happy Hour started early around 3.00pm when Janet and Lesley opened a bottle of white. A little later, some of the menfolk went off to collect some firewood and met John and Tina; Michael, Verylle, Liberty, Elizabeth and Zoe; and Maggie on their way in.

Everyone who had arrived previously then enjoyed Happy Hour and the entertainment provided by the new arrivals as they set up their camps.

A few people visited the river before dinner and the day ended with a quiet night around the camp fire and an-

other early night.

Monday, 28 December

One reason for the early night was the trip leader's habit of making very early starts to driving days. Today, we would be driving along the Deddick Trail on to Yalmy Road and round through Bonang, Tubbut and McKillops Bridge.

We set off at 8.30 and met Bob McKerrow on the road into McKillops Bridge. Bob joined us for the day. After crossing the bridge, we turned on to the Deddick Trail and made our way along this, stopping at a couple of lookouts on the way. We stopped for morning tea at about 9.50 just before Bowens Track. Lunch was near the helipad at the top of the staircase. Some people walked up to the helipad, but it was a hazy day and the view wasn't too good.

The track had been in very good condition, although a bit loose in places and no-one had any trouble on the drive.

We reached the end of the Deddick Trail at about 1.20 and turned left on to Yalmy Road. There was the usual banter about Toyota and Nissan but Ashley astonished us all by declaring his new mission in life. He is going to be the first person to land a Nissan on the moon. No doubt he will be wearing his bike gear and, for life support,



using the air in all four of the Nissan's tyres plus the two spares he would need given the trip is in a remote area.

Then came the highlight of the day. After following Rising

Sun Road, we reached the Orbost-Bonang Road where, courtesy of Ken and Jane, we were privileged to experience a double U-turn. First we turned left, but spying some cows on the road a few hundred meters along, Ken declared a U-turn and back we went, past Rising Sun Road. But, not far. No cows this time, but Ken declared another U-turn and we went back past Rising Sun Road again. Some folks were having afternoon tea on their veranda just on the corner of the road. They seemed quite amused, or bemused, to see all our cars going this way and that way and then back again.



Perhaps Bob knew what was coming, perhaps not, but he left the convoy after the first turn and continued on back to his camp.

We reached Bonang store without further mishap, but were disappointed to find that after all the effort, it was closed. In fact, it had been closed for so long that there were cobwebs covering the bowsers. So, no fuel or ice creams and it was on to Tubbut.

There was no-one home at Tubbut. We checked the houses near the fuel bowsers but everyone was out. It was getting warm so the adults sat in the shade of a big tree outside the school and rested while the kids played in the playground. Ken produced a treat of icy poles for the kids before we set off again for camp.

Back at camp, people rested quietly or went down to the river for a swim, giving Happy Hour a miss for the day. After quiet dinners, everyone was slow to gather around the fire but we passed an entertaining evening chatting, joking and playing word games.

Everyone was in bed before midnight.

Tuesday 29/12/09 (by Anthony Van Buiten)

Tuesday was a lazy day for us. John and Ashley went for a walk starting from McKillops' Bridge. They left early morning and did not return until mid afternoon. Michael and family had decided to go for a bit of a drive to charge the batteries and escape the heat in the air conditioned car. The weather again, was hot. We spent our day doing our best to keep cool. This involved taking the boys

to the river for a swim or just sitting in the shade hoping for some sort of breeze. The monitors were very active this day, making sure their campsite that we were borrowing was all in order. There was some activity at Derek



and Jan's camp. I saw Ken with his multimeter and then later Brian went to retrieve his multimeter and hover around Derek and Jan's solar panel. I didn't think too much of it and resisted the lure of tools and tweaking. I even resisted standing around watching and nodding knowledgeably when someone made comment. It was too hot and I couldn't be bothered to get off my chair. Hours later my curiosity got the better of me and I had to know what was going on. I ventured over to have a sticky beak. This is what was keeping Derek, Ken and Brian them entertained for hours. Derek was concerned that maybe his solar panel was not charging the aux battery in the car. The panel appeared to be creating power; it just didn't seem to be getting out. We determined that the power was definitely there by use of the multimeter. We had three of them on hand so there was plenty of choice. Then Michael had come back from his drive and I volunteered his services by stating that "Michael knows a little bit about this sort of thing" So far we had determined that we had power to the regulator but it wasn't flowing after that to the vehicle. Michael had the answer in that the cable needs to be connected to the battery in order for the regulator to open and allow the current to flow. Once we did that we again chose a multimeter and proved that it was working. We then used a multimeter to measure the amperage being delivered to the battery. So after all this we had determined that the solar panel was in perfect working order and was indeed charging the aux battery in Derek's car. Oh well, it kept us amused and we all learnt a little bit more about solar panels and charging batteries.

Anthony Van Buiten

Wednesday 30th (by Ashley)

For those who had not had enough driving over the past few days, today's trip was to venture down to Jacksons Crossing. Those with less energy decided that spending the

day around camp doing very little was the better option. I decided to do both and attend the trip but do nothing while being John's passenger.

Ken, Jane and boys lead the way with John and I, Derek and Brian, and Anthony following. We headed out of camp and made our way back towards Seldom Seen stopping for fuel. From there we headed down Tulloch Ard Rd stopping for morning tea along the way. From there we turned onto Running Creek Track leading down to the crossing which was in reasonable condition but a little loose in sections. The Snowy and surrounding area at Jacksons is very nice and the crossing while not deep is long. We crossed the river and stopped at the camping area which was a good spot to have lunch and a swim for those needing to cool down.

We made our back along Running Creek Track to the main road. Ken proposed we explore New Guinea Jeep Track which a friend had trouble climbing the previous year. As we had time on our hands we headed down the track with John leading the way. To our disappointment the track was in better condition than Running Creek. We turned around and headed back out to the bitumen.

We eventually made our way back to camp in time for yet another happy hour and a quiet night around the fire.

Ashley

Thursday, 31 December

Maggie, Micheal, Verylle, Elizabeth and Zoe left as they had planned to do. As we had had two very hot days, John and Tina decided to join them. Ashley and Lesley went along to tow Michael's camper-trailer back to the road. Michael's car still had an engine warning light despite the several repair attempts of yesterday. The car was restricted to 2nd gear and 2000 rpm. Michael's plan was to at least reach Buchan, where he could call out the RACV or preferably Bairnsdale, where he could take it into a Nissan dealer. Once on the road, Michael towed the trailer behind Maggie's car and Verylle drove Michael's car.

[Note: they made it to Bairnsdale where the dealer said it would be OK to drive back to Melbourne. The trailer was towed by Maggie's car to Dandenong, where Michael started towing again. Nissan checked the vehicle out over a period of time but found no problem. In fact, the light went out spontaneously during the testing and a fuel quality problem is suspected]

After the group left at 10.00am, another hot day developed and those remaining in camp sat quietly in the shade of their awnings or went down to the river. Ashley and Lesley arrived back at 2.30pm after a drive to McKillops Bridge. As the flies were bad (again), Derek and Janet sat

in their pop-up fly tent while others went down to the river.



Anthony, Aline, Riley, Connor and Brian went for a drive to McKillops Bridge. Derek and Janet stayed in their pop-up tent emerging only when the envious looks from everyone else at Happy Hour became uncomfortable.

The wind came up and dust swirled across the camp ground. Dark clouds began to gather and thunder rumbled

in the distance. The pop-up fly tent blew flat and was dismantled. But it stayed warm.

Everyone seemed drained by the heat and energy was low. Happy Hour had started fairly early and now everyone, faced with the prospect of staying up until midnight, was struggling through the long evening. The energy lifted a bit around 9.00pm when there was an early celebration for the kids with sparklers, glow sticks and party poppers. Soon after they were in bed, but not before Jack distinguished himself by falling asleep sitting up one millisecond after finishing an icy pole.

The adults struggled on under a cloudy sky lit by the full moon. Thunder still rumbled in the distance and several strategies were discussed to bring forward the timing of the New Year. These included pretending to be in New Zealand so we could celebrate two hours earlier. In the end, all except Aline made it to midnight and after the **quickest of quick "Happy New Year" exchanges, everyone** was in bed a few minutes after midnight.

The rain started two hours later and there were a few lights around the camp ground as people made sure they were watertight. Then it was off to sleep again, listening to the sounds of the rain and the thunder rumbling around the hills.

