



FREE WHEELING

March 2023



Photo: Ken Kilby
Nev, Riley, Sean and Matt in
Dargo

Official Newsletter of the
Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club Inc
Registration No: A0002184F

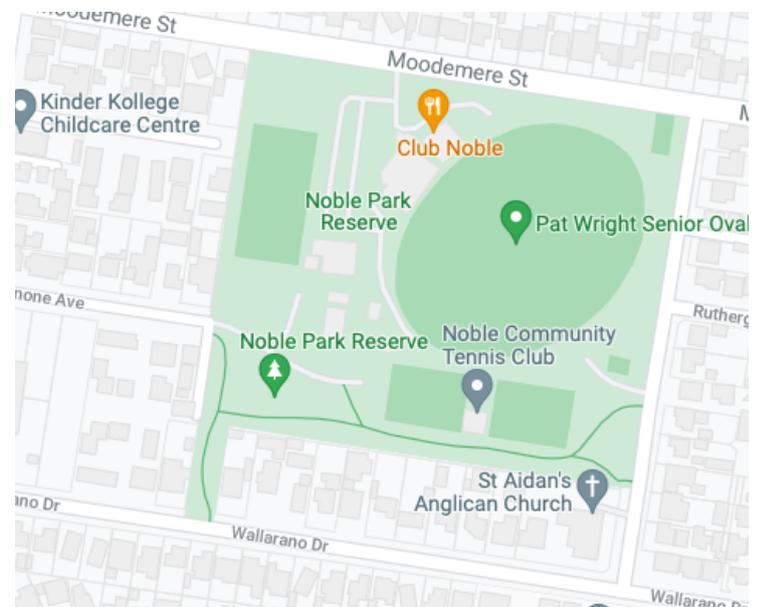


VFWDC Meeting Details & Venue

The club meets on the first Wednesday of each month at 8.00pm with the following exceptions:

No meeting in January
November meeting held at a selected "special" location

Blue and Gold Room
Club Noble
46-56 Moodemere Street
Noble Park 3174
Melways ref: 89 D4



This month's meeting will be held on **Wednesday 1st March** at 8.00pm.

2022 - 2023

President	Callum Brown	president@vfwdc.com
Vice President	Andre Van Der Walt	vicepres@vfwdc.com
Secretary	Bruce Cremonesi	secretary@vfwdc.com
Treasurer	Ly Ho	treasurer@vfwdc.com

General Committee

Trip Coordinator	Neville Van Leeuwen	trips@vfwdc.com
Magazine Editor	Rory Hall	editor@vfwdc.com
Association Delegate	Matt Marino	delegate@vfwdc.com

Support Positions to Committee

Web Manager	Ben Whitworth	web@vfwdc.com
Training Officer	Phil Griffith	
Merchandise	Kelsey Pendrey	merchandise@vfwdc.com
General Committee Member	Daisy Quinn	

Club Details

Registered Name	Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club
Registration Number	A002184F
Correspondence Address	PO Box 778, Dandenong, VIC 3174
Email	secretary@vfwdc.com
Website	www.vfwdc.com

The Victorian Four Wheel Club is an affiliated club of [Four Wheel Drive Victoria](#)

Hi Everyone,

I can't believe its March already. We will be tucking into Easter eggs before we know it!! We have had a good number of trips heading out during February and a big thank you to everyone who led and contributed to the success of those trips. Just as a reminder, if you would like to run a trip and don't know how or are a bit nervous please let anyone on the committee know and we will gladly help you.

It looks like we have some excellent trips coming up. Tristan and Sally as ever at the forefront of imaginative and fun trips with not only their Desert Adventure but also their Border track trip - they both look like rippers. And a day trip to Mount Speculation with Ly could be a fun day out. I am looking at doing a day trip later in March. I am just waiting on a compressor fix and then I will be all set to go. If you have any ideas where you would like to go let me know and we will head on out.

I would like to thank the senior members of the club (senior in their experience as opposed to senior in terms of years!) for their commitment to the upcoming Driver Proficiency Course in March. These are always excellent fun as well as being a superb starting point for new or junior club members to build their knowledge, experience and confidence.

Well that's about all from me. Have a great month and I will see you all at the next general meeting.

Cheers, Cal.



Club Calendar

March

Wednesday 1st	Club Meeting	8.00pm at Club Noble
Fri 10th - Mon 13th	Big Desert Adventure	Organised by Sally & Tristan (see trip details later in magazine)
Wednesday 15th	Committee Meeting (Virtual)	8.00pm
Tuesday 21st	Proficiency Training Theory	7.30pm at Club Noble
Fri 24th - Sun 26th	Proficiency Training Practical	(See Upcoming Trips later in the magazine for details)
Sat 25th	Mount Speculation Day Trip	Organised by Ly (see trip details later in magazine)

April

Wednesday 5th	Club Meeting	8.00pm at Club Noble
Thu 6th - Tue 10th	McCabes Corner & Border Track Trip	Organised by Sally & Tristan (see trip details later in magazine)
Wednesday 19th	Committee Meeting (Virtual)	8.00pm

May

Wednesday 3rd	Club Meeting	8.00pm at Club Noble
Wednesday 17th	Committee Meeting (Virtual)	8.00pm

Other Dates

Sun 18th June	Shrine of Remembrance Tour	Organised by Bruce Dunlop (meeting at 11am)
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Club Merchandise



Need a jacket, vest, shirt or hat for your next trip? Get ready and place your order today.

PRICES

Club SS Polo Shirt	\$30.00	Club Wide-Brim Hat	\$5.00
Club SS Shirt 40th Anniversary	\$10.00	Club Sandwich Peak Hat	\$5.00
Club Polar Fleece Jacket (Full Zip)	\$30.00	Club Woollen Pom Pom Beanie	\$20.00
Club Fleece Hoodie	\$30.00	Club Cable Knit Scarf	\$20.00
Club SS Reversible Vest—double embroidery	\$50.00	Club Neoprene Stubby Holder	\$10.00
Club Drivers Jacket	\$60.00	Club Coth Badges 120mm	\$8.00
Club Trekka Jacket	\$85.00	Windscreen Sticker Small	\$6.00
Club Bucket Hat	\$5.00	Windscreen Sticker Large	\$8.00

We encourage all members to purchase a Club Polo shirt.

Email your order or any queries to merchandise@vfwdc.com along with the size you would like.

Wed 1st February
Opened at 08.04pm

Attendees:

- As per attendance sheet

Apologies:

- Dave B, Kelsey, Gary S, Nikki B

Minutes of previous meeting:

- Minutes from last meeting - Read
- Matters arising from previous minutes - nil
- Accepting of minutes - Anne
- Seconding of minutes - Neville

Guests:

- Several guests who were welcomed to the meeting

Correspondence In:

- Nil

Correspondence Out:

- Replies to emails

Trip Reports:

Matt ran a trip from Largo to Licola which was a great success.

Steve P ran a trip and had a good time.

Magazine:

Thanks to Andy & Suzy for previous month's Meet the Member.

New nomination for Meet the Member - Ken
Don't forget to send in your trip reports!

General Business:

- Discussion around the upcoming 50th birthday for the club next year.
- 4x4 show at Lardner Park coming up
- Bruce asked for interest in a guided tour of Shrine of Remembrance. Show of hands by most members confirmed it as a great idea.
- Bruce is running a trip to Blue Rag for his mate in a wheelchair. Info coming to Neville so keep an eye out for it.
- Matt Marino confirmed as our new 4wd VIC delegate member.

Treasurer's Report:

- Ly reported a different way from online reporting system with the bank
- Monthly Treasurer's Report - as per the magazine
- Accepted: Andre
- Second: Callum

- Stuart mentioned that Stringbark Creek Campground has been updated and worth a visit.
- Raffle with many great prizes

Association Report:

- Nil

Merchandise Report:

- Nil

Driver Training:

- Working on a date in Mar/April
- Show of hands for those interested approx 6

Upcoming Trips:

- Big Desert Trip Labour day weekend with Sally & Tristan
- Flinders Ranges at Easter by Bruce
- Border Track at Easter by Sally & Tristan

Next meeting Wed 1st Mar
Meeting closed at 9.30pm

Bringing Four Wheel Drivers Together



Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club Inc
www.vfwdc.com



Treasurer's Report January 2023

<u>Cheque A/C`</u> Opening Balance as at 01/01/2023	\$8,120.40	
Closing Balance as at 31/01/2023		\$8,120.40
<u>Term Deposit</u> Opening Balance as at 01/01/2023	\$6,888.87	
Closing Balance as at 31/01/2023		\$6,888.87
<u>Petty Cash</u> Opening Balance as at 01/01/2023	\$38.30	
Closing Balance as at 31/01/2023		\$38.30
Consolidated Closing Cash Position		<u>\$15,047.57</u>

This month's meeting

Our next meeting is Wednesday 1st March at Club Noble.

Delegate Representative Committee Member

Big thanks to Matt for sticking his hand up to become the club's delegate representative. If anyone else is interested in learning more about the committee roles or helping out please do not hesitate to contact the committee.

Trip Leaders

The club is keen to encourage more members to lead trips, whilst also recognising that some members are still new and/or worried about the requirements to be a leader. The committee is happy to help and hand hold as required any budding leaders and if there was sufficient interest, may consider running a Trip Leader training event. If you are interested to be a Leader please make contact with Neville as Trips Coordinator or any committee member. Its not as hard or difficult as you may think!

Attracting New Members

As an active and thriving club, we need to keep attracting new members to join us. The committee is currently considering several ideas to try to attract new members and will be discussing these at a future meeting. If you have ideas that you think might be worth considering then please do make contact with a committee member and share.

Club's 50th Birthday

Next year is the club's 50th birthday. The Committee are starting to discuss ideas and outline thoughts. It is likely a working group will be formed and so anyone who has any amazing ideas or would like to be involved, please get in contact with any committee members. We are looking to make it an incredible event so all ideas, no matter how crazy are welcomed.

Merchandise Refresh

Daisy and Kelsey continue to investigate refreshing our merchandise, and are getting closer to announcing some fantastic new style T shirts. Obviously there are lots of factors to take into account such as what to do with the existing stock, getting best prices without being stuck with mountains of spare stuff, and how this could combine with the upcoming 50th birthday. Watch this space.

Proficiency Course

Our 4x4 gurus within the club, the Yodas of tyre pressures and diff locks, have put their very wise heads together and come up with some dates for the next club proficiency course. This course is aimed at people new to offroad driving and is both theoretical and practical in nature. Please check out the Upcoming Trips section for dates and further details.



All and any contributions welcome

Please don't be shy! Help the Editor keep the magazine fun and interesting, and relevant to you, by sharing some words and/or pictures. Literally anything you have is welcome!

Please visit our website at VFWDC.com to view all our current membership forms and club policies.

For all new and renewal of memberships, please complete [the online form here](#)

If you are looking for a Temporary Membership, please complete the online form, [which can be found here](#).

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us via the Club Secretary on secretary@vfwdc.com

Payments:

Payment can be made via Bank Transfer. The details are as follows:

Account Name:	Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club Inc
BSB:	633108
Account No:	111761979

Please ensure your transfer includes your name as provided on the membership application and renewal form in the reference.

Once you have made your payment/transfer, please send your completed membership application and renewal form to treasurer@vfwdc.com or you can present it to the Treasurer at any general meeting.

Thank you for choosing the Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club

If you are interested in joining [Club Noble](#) where we hold our monthly meetings, their application form can be found [here](#).

Meet the Members

Big shout out to Ken for his answers to our monthly questions. Believe it or not he used to have a massive perm, wants to chat to Galileo and always has an axe in his car in case of unexpected events!!



Full name and any nicknames?

Kenneth R Kilby - Kenny

When did you join the club?

July 2022

What's your vehicle?

2019 Mitsubishi Triton, owned since new.

First car you ever owned?

1968 Holden HK Station Wagon, bought in 1977 for \$1,400 with 70,000 MILES on the clock. Bought the wagon for sleeping in when camping, and for those old enough to remember, it came in very handy at the Drive In Theatre.



Favourite camp food?

Bread cooked in the camp oven

Top tip to any beginners?

Buy the accessories you actually need, not what you think you need.

Best piece of camping gear you are never without?

Chainsaw and axe. My axe lives in the car. It has been needed at the most unexpected of times.

Where in the world would you most like to visit?

Would like to go back to Europe, see more of Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

Worst upgrade or kit purchase?

I do a lot of research on what i buy so I don't really have any regrets on anything.

Best trip/track/park you have done?

Billy Goats Bluff Track



What is your favourite tittle?

Red wine especially Shiraz

What kept you sane during lockdowns?

Maintaining my garden kept me busy

Footie, football or rugby?

Footie - long suffering Saints supporter.

Dream track or trip at the top of your bucket list?

Wilpena Pound in Flinders Ranges

Dream vehicle and set up if you could afford it?

Andre St Pierre White's Landcruiser. It has everything and is well thought out. See [4XOverland on YouTube](#).

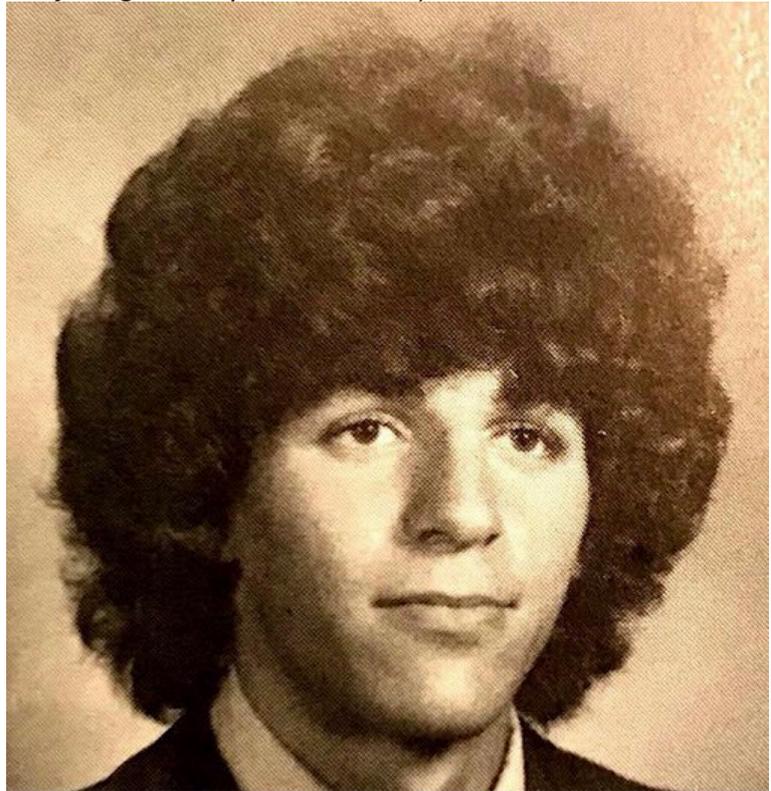


Dumbest thing you ever did in a car?

I fell asleep at the wheel. I woke up when the wheels went into the gravel and managed not to crash somehow.

Craziest haircut you ever had?

A perm when they were all the go back in the late 80's or early 90's. Was short lived and sorry no photos available. (Ed: Were perms ever the go?? Fortunately i was able to contact Ken's family and they dug out a photo for me).



Best mod you ever did to a car?

Upgrading the suspension on the Triton improved the car dramatically.

What snacks are we most likely to find in your cab?

Anything i can heat up in the food warmer.

Can you play a musical instrument?

I learnt to play the guitar but realised i was much better at listening to music than actually playing it.

Best book you have ever read and recommend to others?

QF32 by Richard De Crespigny. The pilot's incredible story of the Qantas A£*) engine failure in 2010. The only book i have read that kept me on the edge of my seat.

Any wildlife encounters on any of your trips?

Plenty of snakes. I've hit kangaroos 3 times. One hit the bullbar, no damage. One dented the bonnet. One took out every panel down one side plus side mirror when it ran into the front mudguard. It happened at night while i was doing 100kmh. Fortunately the car was still drivable.

What are you currently watching on Netflix that you can recommend?

All Quiet on the Western Front - exceptional WW1 movie.

Best overseas trip/ location?

Switzerland - I went there in 2013. The mountains and scenery are just stunning.

Favourite subject at school?

Technical Drawing and History
(Ed: Photo of Ken at work in 1985 putting his technical drawing to good use)



Worst job you ever had?

My first part time job - washing out drums in a chemical factory after school.

Roughest night's sleep?

Just a sleeping bag on the concrete floor under a picnic shelter in freezing cold and pouring rain somewhere near Noojee when i was about 16.

What is your go to karaoke song?

Albatross by Fleetwood Mac best suits my singing ability. (Ed: Is that an instrumental by any chance???)

Most remote place you have ever been to?

Near Ivanhoe, NSW, just south of Wilcannia

What motivates/inspires you?

Being out in nature and being bale to pass that on to my grandchildren.

You're driving from Melbourne to Perth, anyone in the world, dead or alive, can be your co-driver, who would it be?

Galileo - The Italian Astronomer, Physicist and Engineer. One of the pioneers of modern science.



Upcoming Trips

Destination	Mount Speculation
Leader & Contact Details	Ly Ho Mob: 0433 387811. Email: ly.tri.ho@gmail.com
Date	Saturday 25th March
Meeting Details	Mirimbah Park and playground at 9am
Grade	Dry: Easy/Medium Wet: Medium/Hard
Trip Activity Details	<p>Missed out on walking up Mount Speculation the other week so coming back for it!</p> <p>Air down at Mirimbah park and playground where there's toilets. Head up Mount Stirling Road and heads towards Mount Speculation carpark. Park our cars and walk up 1.2km up to the mountain – signage says takes 30mins to walk up! Enjoy the views and head back to our cars.</p> <p>Drive down to Kings Hut, maybe lunch there – there's a drop toilet! Then head out via King Basin Road, Black Landing Track, Circuit Road. There's a few river crossings. Air up at Mirimbah park and playground.</p> <p>If peeps want to camp Friday night/Saturday afterwards, there's a great camp spot just across from the playground park. Let me know if you're keen to join.</p> <p>Itinerary: https://goo.gl/maps/QRj34FMErMENKnQS6</p>
Vehicle Limits	Minimum 2, Maximum 8
Approx km's meeting place to destination	104km from start to finish
Last available fuel	Petrol & Diesel in Mansfield
Distance between supplies	Mansfield and Mirimbah Park is about 30kms away
Equipment required	Full recovery gear and points. Walking boots. Camping equipment if planning to camp any days.
Maps required	TBC
Radio Channel CB/UHF	UHF 12 to start with and then move if its busy

Upcoming Trips

Destination	Big Desert Adventure
Leader & Contact Details	Sally & Tristan (Sally: 0435 782207. Tristan: 0468958444)
Date	Friday 10th to Monday 13th March
Meeting Details	BP Calder Park Outbound 08.00am for 08.30am departure If you want to come later in the day or meet on Saturday morning that is fine and can be coordinated
Grade	Dry: Easy Wet: Medium
Trip Activity Details	Leaving on the Friday before Labour weekend, we will head up to the North Side of Big Desert to our base camp for the weekend at Blue Gum Campsite. Saturday and Sunday will be exploring Big Desert and Big Dune, returning to our base camp each night. Lots of sand dunes and can get very muddy in the area if there has been rain. Head back home on Monday
Vehicle Limits	Minimum 3, Maximum 8
Approx km's meeting place to destination	550 kms
Last available fuel	Ouyen (both petrol & diesel)
Distance between supplies	125 km to Ouyen 35 km to Pinnaroo
Equipment required	Full recovery gear for sand and mud. Camping equipment for 3 nights of base camping. Camper trailers are welcome to come. There is some reasonable sand 4 wheel driving required to get into camp with a couple of nice little climbs.
Maps required	Trip leader has: Victoria's Deserts Map by Meridian Maps FFM Big Desert State Forest 4WD Touring Map
Radio Channel CB/UHF	UHF 13 to start with and then move if its busy

Upcoming Trips

Destination	McCabes Corner and Border Track
Leader & Contact Details	Sally & Tristan (Sally: 0435 782207. Tristan: 0468958444)
Date	Thursday 6th April to Tuesday 10th April (Easter)
Meeting Details	TBC as some will leave on Thursday and some on Friday
Grade	Dry: Medium Wet: Medium/Hard
Trip Activity Details	Thursday: Head to a campsite on the Murray river near Mildura Friday: Try and find McCabe corner marker and meet those people that are going to head up today. Will camp at site behind Shearers Quarters Murray Sunset National Park Saturday: Run down Border Track in the Murray Sunset, head into Pinaroo to top up with Fuel and stay at The Pines at start of Border Track (one way section) Sunday: Border Track (one way section) to Red Bluff or Broken Bucket Camp Monday: Head home for some or maybe stay another night somewhere.
Vehicle Limits	Minimum 2, Maximum 5
Approx km's meeting place to destination	700 kms Round trip approx 1500km
Last available fuel	Red Cliffs/Renmark (both petrol & diesel)
Distance between supplies	200km
Equipment required	Full recovery gear for sand and mud. Sand flags, max tax or equivalent, camping equipment, food, water for pack up and move camping. Also need a permit for Ngarkat Park.
Maps required	Victoria's Deserts Map by Meridian Maps Border Track Map
Radio Channel CB/UHF	UHF 13 to start with and then move if its busy

Upcoming Trips

Destination	Proficiency Training
Leader & Contact Details	Ashley Martin - 0428 134 999 Phil Griffith - 0419 865 472
Date	Theory - Tuesday 21st March, 7:30pm start Practical - Friday 24th - Sunday 26th March
Meeting Details	Theory - Noble Park Football Club, Blue & Gold Room Practical - Service Centre Officer (Princess Hwy) Friday @ 5pm/Saturday @7:30am
Grade	Dry: Easy/Medium Wet: Easy/Medium
Trip Activity Details	<p>The Club encourages all members to participate in a proficiency course to ensure the basic fundamentals of 4 wheel driving are gained.</p> <p>Theory provides an overview of the tread lightly principals, vehicles dynamics and functions, tackling various terrains along with other subjects. This provides the background for the practical weekend.</p> <p>Practical we run through individual vehicles and differences, basic recovery equipment and recap some of the theory (including homework). We then begin the practical side running through several techniques to ensure safe vehicle recovery when in difficult situations. Once all participants are confident with these we hit the tracks to put all the theory into practice.</p> <p>Sunday will be a leisurely start then we traverse a number of tracks which allow you to become familiar with your vehicles capabilities and gain further confidence. We should be finished by 2 o'clock arriving back to Melbourne around 4.</p> <p>As with past participants the weekend provides confidence to safely 4WD either with the club or friends</p>
Vehicle Limits	Minimum 4, Maximum 8
Approx km's meeting place to destination	300 kms approx
Last available fuel	Moe (both petrol & diesel)
Equipment required	Theory - pen and concentration Practical - You will need to be self-sufficient for camping and have your brain switched on!
Maps required	https://goo.gl/maps/GTrQDz5RLHS2
Radio Channel CB/UHF	UHF 12 to start with and then move if its busy

Trip Report

Bunyip State Forest Night Run, Saturday 11th February, by Mary Griffiths

Attendees:

Neville Van Leeuwen

Cees / Andre Van Der Walt

Matt Marino

Ken Kilby

Jeff & Mary Griffiths

Triton Ute

Triton Ute

Hilux Ute

Triton

Mazda BT 50

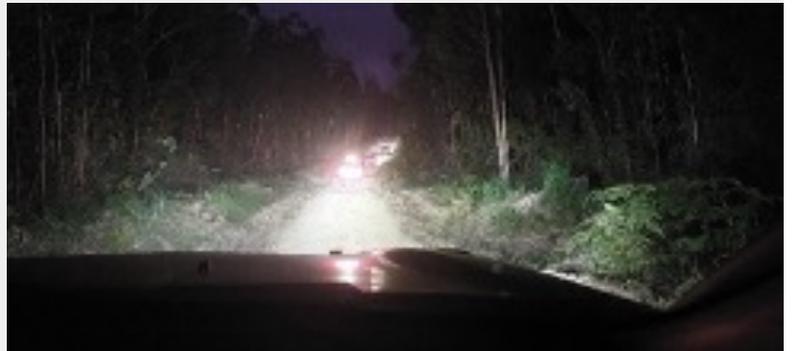
I have put all the directions in so you might want to go and do this trip during the day if you have some free time. Take your maps just in case – maybe a tree might fall over or a road closure. I wouldn't recommend doing this in the wet as it would be a giant bog hole but when the tracks are dry it's ok.

Our trip started at Ampol Longwarry and departed at 8.00 pm. We were all eager as we hadn't been on a night trip for a while. We headed off onto Tea Tea Road with Neville leading the way where we pulled over to air down.



It was good to use spotlights again out on the tracks.

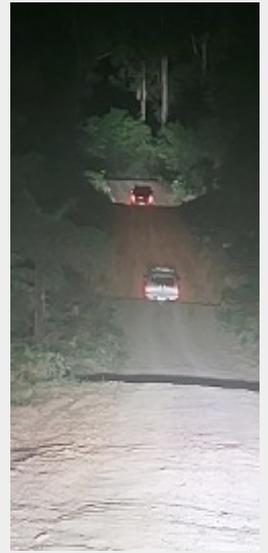
We continued on and turned right onto Western Track and meandered our way down further to turn right onto Sunset Firebreak.



The trees are so tall along here, and a few deep ruts with a few whoop de doos but no issue for Trusty Tritons, Luxy and BT - Especially when the roads and tracks are dry.



Four cars went up, Jeff and I waited at the bottom for a car to pass. Yes there were cars out and about on the tracks up here and campers too. We turned right onto Bunyip Road (this is the beginning of Gentle Annie Track).



They all got out and decided which line was the best to take. The Trusty Tritons took the track to the side. Matt and Jeff decided to drive up over the rock steps with Andre guiding the way.



Have a look at the videos and pictures posted on Club Facebook site for more action on this. Matt got up over the rock steps after two attempts. Jeff took a different line, thought he would engage both diff locks and crawl up over but got hung up on a rock. (he reversed up a couple of times) Andre put a MaxTrax under the rear wheel and he made it up. Everyone was happy for a bit of adventure.

Matt and Jeff successfully managed to get over the rocks so we continued on Bunyip Road on Gentle Annie Track, turned right on to Forest Road, down in the valley (past the discovery biking track), continued on and then turned left onto Quartz Creek Road (did a hair pin turn – two point turn for the BT) and turned right to South Hells Gate, we drove on and turned right again onto Robinsons Creek and then we came to a fork in the road mmm... checked the maps just to make sure, drove on and turned left towards South Hells Gate, continued on and turned left onto Dougout Track (Dougout Track changes name to Forbidden Road by the way), continued on and then turned left at the intersection onto Tarago Road and turned right again onto BT Divide Track.

Yes - of course we had to drive on the BT Divide Track but I think our BT50 turned into a BT25 again (more about this later)

We drove up through the gates, veered right up the hill and followed it around to the right (not left – it's deceiving at night), continued straight ahead up the hill on BT Divide Track and veered left at the fork to stay on BT Divide Track through the other set of gates. Turn right onto Limberlost Road to the Timberlost Day Rest Area to air up and go home. We finished at 1.00am. We chatted for a while then aired up (well some of us did). Jeff thought he had blown a fuse in the air compressor, and it wouldn't work we had to borrow some air.

Thanks Andre for filling up a tyre. (He is automatically so helpful). We were all standing around chatting watching Andre fill up our tyre and then he realized it wasn't his car and kindly gave the job over to Jeff to do the rest.

Everyone enjoyed themselves. As one of the guys said, it was better than watching Netflix on a Saturday night. Thanks Neville for leading a good trip. It was such a pleasure to go out with such a keen enthusiastic group. Hopefully another night run will be on the agenda soon.

Cheers

Mary Griffiths



Dargo - Billy Goat Bluff Track - Licola. 26-29th January

Attendees:

Matt Marino - Trip Organiser and Leader- Toyota Hi Lux
Neville & Riley van Leeuwin- Joint Trip Leaders- Mitsubishi Triton
Ken Kilby- Trip Reporter -Mitsubishi Triton
Dennis Alphonsus- Jeep Rubicon
Sean Graydon- Toyota FJ Cruiser

With a great weather forecast for the extra-long weekend we were all itching to get going after meeting at the Officer BP servo on Australia Day. As I pulled in a couple of minutes past 8:00, I noticed a bright Red Jeep Rubicon driving in just ahead of me. Everyone was already there and after a coffee and a bit of chit-chat we headed off around 8:20. As we were leaving someone asked who was going to write the trip report. Well, Dennis very quickly chimed in with “The person who arrived last has to write the report”. Guess who was driving the Red Rubicon! I think I need to check the Club rule book on that one.

We filled up again at Sale with Sean & Matt also refuelling with coffee. I'm not sure about Matt, but Sean seemed to be on his last legs having gone 2 hours without caffeine.

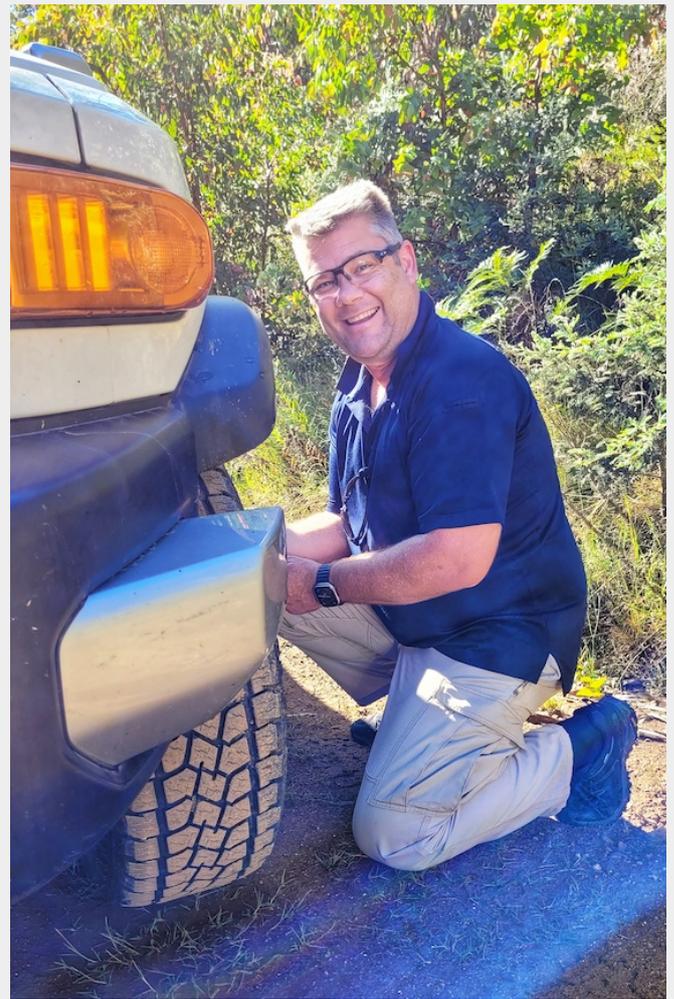
We arrived at Dargo in time for lunch at the Pub. All parking spots at the Pub were taken, so we thought we might be in for a bit of a wait but surprisingly the bar was completely empty and only a few people were in the Bistro so we didn't have to wait long for our meals. Steak sandwiches were the popular choice by the crew. We couldn't get the mandatory car line-up shot in front of the Pub but got a group shot instead. Matt showed off his style wearing his so called Brunswick Reeboks, i.e. Adidas sandals.



After topping up with fuel from the General store our next stop was Italian Flat Campsite for the night. It was quite popular with not much room left so we continued on to Jimmy Iverson's Campground a short distance up the track. It was less crowded and we secured a large area, close enough, but not too close to the one drop Dunny.

After setting up camp, Neville, Riley and I set off to find some firewood. Neville was smart enough to bring a bag of wood with him so at least we had something to start with. It quickly looked like that bag of wood was going to be our saviour as there was nothing around. After driving a few km's we found only one suitable log.

Not long after we returned to Camp it started to drizzle which continued throughout the night. At least it wasn't freezing though.



Cooking dinner that night, Dennis tried to set fire to his gas stove. The gas canister wasn't sealing properly and the leaking gas ignited at the nozzle. He stopped it quickly and with a realignment of the canister it was all good to go again.

After a long day & with the constant drizzle, an early night was had by all. Preceding this, Matt had issued a warning of his snoring prowess, but was considerate enough to pitch his swag on the other side of the track to lessen the impact.

As it turned out his snoring wasn't the problem, the music from the large group next door made sure we didn't go to sleep easily.

Next morning after packing up all the wet gear we were set for the big day. Getting away just after 8:30 we climbed the Dargo High Plains road to the turn off at Grant Junction where we aired down. By this time the clouds started to disappear and we were welcomed with a lovely blue sky.

Continuing along Mc Millans road passing through the old Grant Township, we arrived at Talbotville where we stopped for a quick map check and some more route planning. We parked just near the only drop dunny and it just so happened that we were on the downwind side. A quick decision to move 20 metres to the left was in everyone's best interest.



Talbotville was reasonably busy including a large group from the Pajero club and quite a few cows wandering around the open grassed areas.

Moving on was the start of eight crossings of the Crooked and Wongangarra Rivers. Luckily the rains we copped prior to Christmas had long ceased & the Rivers had dropped considerably making the crossings drama free.

Next stop was at Kingwill Bridge Camp area for a short break, map check and some photos before heading up to the start of Billy Goat Bluff track.

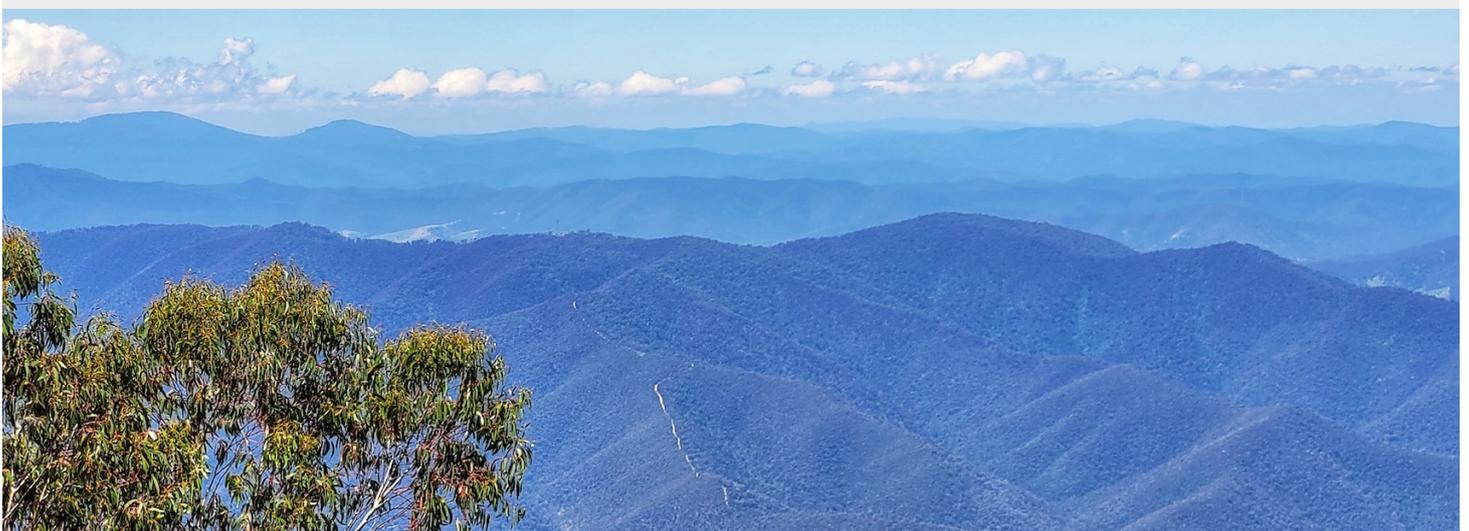


The day was warming up quite quickly with the temp now 29°. We especially wanted to do Billy Goats before Saturday as the forecast was 37°.

Matt & Dennis started up Billy Goats and advised of oncoming traffic so Sean, Neville & I waited about 10 minutes till they came down before starting off. We started at 11:30am making our way carefully up to the Helipad where we stopped for the view & photo opportunities. From the Helipad, looking at the track following the Ridge line, it sunk in just what we had let ourselves in for. It was awe inspiring & terrifying at the same time.



The track was a mix of fine dust, gravel, large loose rock, jagged exposed rock, woops and very steep drop offs to the side. A couple of our cars had diff lockers, mine included, which I felt helped considerably. That said all the cars made it to the top without any problems or damage, reaching the Pinnacles at 1:00pm just in time for lunch. When nearing the top Dennis called over the radio, "This track just keeps on giving". Definitely not a track for the faint hearted.





After lunch break in some shade as it was quite hot by now in the full sun, we did the 350 metre walk up to the Fire tower. We were so lucky with the weather and had the most beautiful blue skies & fantastic views. After the photo shoot we headed back down to find a Campsite for the night.





Horseyard Flat looked a suitable spot, but after arriving there was some indecision on whether to stay or have a look at Moroka Hut, 7.5 km further on. With plenty of daylight left we decided to check it out.

On the way we stopped for a bit of map checking as it was not clear which side of the river the hut was on. While stopped it was noticed there was a strong smell of gas coming from Matt's car. As soon as Matt opened the tailgate it was immediately obvious the tub was full of gas. It turned out the valve on a 2kg gas bottle had somehow unscrewed and almost the entire contents had leaked into the tub. If there had been any sort of electrical short or ignition source it could have been a disaster.

Arriving at Moroka hut was a disappointment, the single camp site was too small & not very level. The rain from the previous night had made the track quite muddy and the whole place was very unappealing. So it was back to Horseyard Flat for the night. Arriving at our pre-selected spot we were just beaten to the punch by another car also checking it out. Sean's Army training kicked in with him on the radio telling us to "Advance, keep moving....hold your ground." After a few minutes they left so we had our spot for the night.



Neville discovered his fridge was not running, having blown a fuse in the power circuit to the tub. Fortunately he was able to get it running again by changing to a power outlet inside the car.

Firewood was easy to come by this time and I wish I had known earlier, otherwise I wouldn't have lugged a heavy bag of the leftover wood from Dargo all the way up Billy Goats.

Time to get the campfire going and Dennis showed us his wood splitting skills with the axe. Let me just say that if it had been a cold night we would have frozen to death waiting for something to burn. Dennis is also a Whiskey connoisseur and it was really interesting to learn a few things about the different styles and types of Scotch Whiskey.

Everyone relaxed around the fire basking in the glory of conquering the Billy Goat Bluff track, arguably the most iconic track in the Victorian high Country. On the way up I spoke to somebody going the other way that had done the track many times, and said it was in the worst condition he had ever seen.

We had a great night with lots of laughs, great conversation and more than a few drinks. Sean brought out his Bourbon which he brought along in a "designer" Goon bag!

Some of us (or was it only me?) went to bed swaying like a Sailor on shore leave that night.

Due to the forecast of 37° and with our mission accomplished, we decided to head back to Licola on Saturday with a stop off at Dimmick's Lookout (about 13km's from Arbuckle Junction on the Howitt High Plains road) and then head home a day early. The detour to the lookout was well worth it offering one of the best views in the High Country. The photos just don't do it justice.

A quick stop to check out some of the campsites along the Wellington River and air back up. Then onto Licola for Lunch where Pies & Sausage rolls from the General Store were the order of the day.

After that it was time to drive home to complete a trip distance of 700 km.

Thanks to Matt & Neville for leading and organising the trip, everyone agreed what a great time they'd had and there was talk of Blue Rag as the next Icon to tick off the list.

Also thanks to Riley for doing a great job on the Comm's when Neville was leading and Tail end Charlie.

Ken Kilby





Photo: Ken Kilby
VIC High Country at its best