



Free Wheeling

Official Newsletter of the Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club

Registration No A0002184F

"Bringing Four Wheel Drivers Together"

FEBRUARY 2005

Happy New Year



Christmas/New Year 2004-2005



The Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club Inc is an affiliated club of the Victoria Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs Inc (VAFWDC) www.vafwdc.org.au, and a member of Tread Lightly! Australia www.treadlightlyaustralia.com.au

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President	John Partridge	0428 331211
Vice President	Carl Surtees	9706 2692
Treasurer	Roger Baird	9704 9045
Secretary	Lesley Peters	9540 0007

GENERAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Stephen Boyle	Projects Coordinator	9754 4412
Barry Leitch	Librarian	5996 6662
Ashley Martin	Events Coordinator	9540 0007
George Pledger	New Member Contact	9547 4021
Michael Rodger	Trip Coordinator	0412 530666
Paul Ryan	Assistant Secretary	9807 5193
Anthony Van Buiten	Web Manager	0413 784074
Ian Warburton		9754 2341

Association Delegate	Roger Baird	9704 9045
Club Historian	Phil Alder	9754 8487
Training Officers	Mark Kochan	9763 2052
	Ashley Martin	0438 600904
	John Partridge	0428 331211
Newsletter Editor	Lesley Peters	9540 0007
	lespet03@yahoo.com.au	

Registered Name: Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club Inc

Registration No: A002184F

All correspondence: The Secretary
VFWDC Inc
PO Box 778
Dandenong Vic 3175

Web Site: www.vfwdc.com

Meetings: Held first Tuesday of each month
excluding January (no meeting).
The November meeting is held on the
2nd 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 February 2005

Hi there. Happy New Year, and welcome to the February edition of *Free Wheeling*.

I hope that everyone is feeling refreshed after a break for what is promising to be another great year of off road adventure.

We have plenty of trips coming up, including a few easy to medium day trips. One of our aims for this year is to have an easy to medium trip every month through out the year. There are quite a few people that struggle to get away for longer periods and we have been a bit lacking in choice of shorter trips in the past. Another benefit of having these day trips is that it's a perfect opportunity for someone who hasn't led a trip before to give it a go. We have a few guidebooks in the library which will make the planning all that much easier. There are also many members on hand that are more than willing to help out, whether it be doing a recce trip or supporting you on the day. It isn't as hard as it may seem. One definite bonus is that you won't have to travel in other's dust!! At the next meeting, just have a chat to our Trip Coordinator, Michael Rodger, for some ideas of destinations, or to find out what else is involved.

We have Noel Lees from Parkers Corner DSE coming to our March General Meeting. Some of you have met Noel at the Meringtons Camping Ground working bee. Noel is in charge of tracks in the Walhalla to Woods Point area. This is an area which we frequent the most as it has some of the best four wheel driving in the state. This will be a great opportunity to learn more about the area and hear about some of the mining heritage that Noel is so passionate about. We will also have a chance to fire off a few questions regarding maintenance of tracks etc. This may help us understand the DSE's role and is another chance for the DSE to understand our needs as recreational four wheel drivers.

Until the next time we meet, take care.

Regards

John

John Partridge
gujohnno@yahoo.com.au

MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING 07 DECEMBER 2004

The December General Meeting was held at Dandenong Library and opened at 8.10pm by John Partridge.

38 members present.

APOLOGIES: Neil and Norma Stephenson, Aline Van Buiten, Maxine Ryan, Liz Beaton, Yvonne Hempston, Judy Murray, Graham Ralph, Pat Casey, Lisa Petrou, Glenn and Jackie Hughes, Gary and Paula Johnston.

VISITORS: Welcome to Shaun Morton and Jade Christensen.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:

Minutes of November meeting as per Newsletter.
Accepted: Tania Utting. Seconded: Peter Petrou.

MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:
Nil.

SUPPER: Annie and Jill.

CORRESPONDENCE IN:

- Letter from Beadell Tours of SA advising of their launch, together with info on 2005 tours and expeditions. Beadell Tours "run desert trips at a more relaxed pace than the more conventional commercial tours available".
- Letter from Mark Kochan expressing his disappointment at being omitted from the roll call for the Advanced Training Weekend.
For those not aware, Mark is the Club's senior driving instructor, and apologies have been extended by both John and Ashley for this oversight.
- Promotional material from GPS Direct, including advise of special on Colour Maggellan Meridian Super Pack Special at \$999 until 1 January 05 or until sold out.
- Promotional material from All Terrain 4x4 – on back table with mags etc – including details of their vehicle rear drawer system from \$495.
- Association correspondence:
 - Letter to Ashley advising of Michael Rodger's acceptance as Trainee Instructor, also enclosing copy of letter sent direct to Michael. Congratulations Michael.
 - Notification of 4WD Vic's 30th Anniversary Ball to be held on 12 February 2005. Tickets \$75 per person.
 - Email from Michael Coldham regarding the Eureka Forum. This was circulated by email today.
- Email from Pat Callinan of Australian 4WD Monthly congratulating us on our newsletter. "It's one of the best I've seen. Keep the shiny side up!". This was a follow-up to John's contact with Pat and his subsequent approval to include in our newsletter

some of the monthly "tips" and other articles published in their magazine.

- Email from Leigh and Anne Pettigrew announcing the birth of their grandson, Dylan Joseph – who of course is also the grandson of Rosalie and David Hughes. Congratulatory email response sent to Rebekkah and Craig and the proud grandparents.
- Various club newsletters and company flyers.

CORRESPONDENCE OUT:
Newsletter.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Treasurer presented reports for both November and December.

Petty Cash:	\$ 200.00
Cheque Account:	\$3,252.60
Term Deposit:	\$5,184.15

Accepted: Michael Rodger. Seconded: Terry Johninke.

PRESENTATION:

John handed the meeting over to Finn Hansen of Accidental First Aid Supplies Pty Ltd who provided a detailed overview on the subject of First Aid and the relevant items associated with First Aid Kits. Many thanks to Finn for an excellent and informative presentation.
Accidental First Aid Supplies Pty Ltd has been trading for over 18 years and has a national network with an-in-the-field force exceeding 80 representatives. The Melbourne office is located in McKinnon.

TRIP CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT:

- **Trip Reports:**
 - Nav Run – JP.
 - Buffalo River (in lieu of Mayford) – ADM.
 - Christmas Party – ADM.A brief overview was given on each of the above trips. See detailed reports in Trip Report Section this month.
- **Forthcoming Trips/Events:** Michael Rodger reported on the following upcoming trips as per calendar, including additional trips into 2005:
 - 11 December: Oxfam Christmas Tree Deliveries. Ashley advised still room for more volunteers. He will send email reminder to all participating members.
 - Christmas/New Year: Collins Hut. MR/AVB heading up on 26/12. Members can make their own way up at any time over the period. Maps available.
 - 2-16 January: SE Australia – Anthony Van Buiten.
 - 21-24 January: Otways – John Partridge. Camping at Dandos.
 - 26 January Australia Day: Mt Disappointment – Michael Rodger.
 - 26-30 January: Alpine NP Tour – Carl Surtees.
 - 4-5 February: Mt Cole – Michael Rodger.
 - 11-14 March: Buchan Caves – Anthony VB.
 - 24-28 March (Easter): Hattah-Kulkyne NP – Michael Rodger.

You will find details of all above trips in Forthcoming Trips section.

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES REPORT:

As the Club's regional representative, John Partridge reported on the following activities:

- The 4WD Works 3 Year Plan has been circulated for comment. The document details all funding allocations available and to which tracks funds have been allocated. The plan is available on the Yahoo site in the "Files" section.
- Continuing discussions with Noel Lees. Deep Ck tracks scheduled for grading. Will leave alone and have alternate "chicken tracks" available. This is a big change in attitude from earlier this year, resulting from our talks with Noel and the working bee earlier this year.
- A \$250 fine will be imposed on Merringtons Camping ground litterers.
- JP raised the issue of more people assisting with the RR role. As stated on radio last week, we are seen as one of the leading 4WD clubs in the State, setting the standard for the entire Regional Representatives program. This is great exposure for our Club and the 4WD movement, so let's have some other Club members contributing, eg:
 - One office to contact each month.
 - Report back to JP.
 - Any action required will be organised by the Regional Reps Committee and FWDVic.
 - Does not take up too much time.
 - But very important.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

- Personal Information Form: JP stressed the importance that all members complete the form and keep in their vehicle. Forms available from Lesley (by email) or on internet at Yahoo Groups.
- JP advised that he had once again been approached by Michael Coldham to join the committee of Four Wheel Drive Victoria and has decided to accept the offer. This will have benefit to the VFWDC by raising our profile within the Association; dispersing the myth that VFWDC and FWDVic are one and the same; and provide the opportunity to have a say in FWDVic's policies. John stressed that the appointment would in no way affect his role as President of the Club, but did suggest that it presents the opportunity for other club members to step forward and help out.
Congratulations to John on this positive move forward for both himself and the Club.
- Newsletter: We have received several very positive comments about the quality of our newsletter in the last few weeks, eg. Editor of *Pajero Magazine*; *Australian 4WD Monthly*; Ian Lacey on Stereo 97.4FM. John and Lesley thanked all those who had made the effort to contribute to the newsletter over the past year, in particular Annie for her column, and those trip scribes who, under great pressure, have risen to the occasion and presented some really interesting and first-rate trip reports.

- JP wished everyone and Merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year.

RAFFLE: Tickets sold by Liberty and Elizabeth Rodger.

Thank you girls 😊

Won by: Maggie Melcher – Champagne/Glasses Set.

Tania Utting – Oil & Vinegar Jar set.

MEETING CLOSED at 10.45pm.

NEXT MEETING: Will be held at Dandenong Library on Tuesday, 1 February 2005.

CLUB NOTES:

A special thank you to Annie Simpson for her constant appearance in the kitchen each month. Annie is always ready and willing – with a smile! – to set up and offer assistance wherever she can.

I, personally, would like to express my gratitude for her camaraderie over the past 12 months.

Thanks Annie. **LP**

AUSTRALIAN 4WD MONTHLY

Quick Tips

"Slowly Goes It!"

With big lifts come bigger diameter tyres – usually. These larger tyres are great for gaining extra clearance under the chassis and the running gear, but they can upset final gear ratios both on-road and off-road. This can lead to loss of power, higher fuel consumption and performance degradation.

There are two ways to combat this 'over gearing': either fit corrected diff gears or fit transmission gears.

Transfer gears offer greatly reduced low-range gearing for the slow gnarly stuff, while slightly dropping high-range for on-road use. Some set-ups offer an extra 'stubby' lever, giving three to shuffle while 4WDing. Basically, you get whatever is available from the various manufactures.

Changing ring and pinion gears in both front and rear diffs will change final drive ratios equally in high and low-range. Custom gear sets are available from specialist manufactures.

Once you have finished playing around with tyres, check out www.csgnetwork.com/gearratcalc.html to calculate the new gear ratios for front and rear diffs.

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Australian 4WD Monthly*

[submitted by John Partridge]

CLUB CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

FEBRUARY

Tuesday 1 st	Club Meeting Guest Speaker – Noel Lees, DSE	John Partridge
Saturday 5 th to Sunday 6 th	Mt Cole (Ballarat)	Michael Rodger
Sunday 13 th	Lerderderg Day Trip	Anthony VB
Sunday 20 th	Victorian 4WD Show Wandin	
Tuesday 22 nd	Committee Meeting	Michael Rodger

MARCH

Tuesday 1 st	Club Meeting	John Partridge
Sunday 6 th	Day Trip	TBC
Friday 11 th to Monday 14 th	Buchan Caves	Anthony VB
Thursday 24 th to Monday 28 th	Easter Hattah-Kulkyne NP	Michael Rodger
Tuesday 29 th	Committee Meeting	Anthony VB

APRIL

Tuesday 5 th	Club Meeting	John Partridge
Sunday 10 th	Gembrook Day Trip	Ashley Martin
Friday 22 nd to Sunday 24 th	King River	Ashley Martin
Tuesday 26 th	Committee Meeting	Ian Warburton

MAY

Tuesday 3 rd	Club Meeting	John Partridge
Tuesday 31 st	Committee Meeting	Roger Baird



Sunday 20th February 2005.

9:30 am to 4:00 pm.

Click [here](#) to go to the Melways site for online maps you can print.

The address of the Show is:

Wandin Park Equestrian Centre

Victoria Road

Wandin North Victoria 3225

Melways map 119 G7.

Entry \$10 per adult. Children under 16 FREE



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Welcome to

The Corner

Well hello all. Here we are again, ready and raring for another year of fun and frolic. Hope you enjoy the column. If you have any additions, or perhaps something you think would go nicely in our "little ladies corner", please don't hesitate to send it to me... our dear editor includes my email address at the bottom of each edition, so don't be shy...

Also, I hope you all had a lovely and safe Christmas and New Year, and look forward to saying hello to you at our next meeting. Cheers, Annie



Now, here's something nice and easy to whip up for a quick lunch.

Lemon, Grape Tomato and Basil Spaghetti



Ingredients

1 punnet of red grape tomatoes, halved
375g spaghetti
150g green olives
150g black olives
bunch of fresh basil leaves
60ml extra virgin olive oil
2 garlic cloves {crushed}
2 tspns finely grated lemon rind
salt and freshly ground black pepper
shaved parmesan and lemon wedges to serve

Method

Cook spaghetti to packet directions (personally I prefer more *al dente*)
Drain well and transfer to a large bowl.
Add tomatoes, olives, basil, oil, garlic and lemon rind, and gently toss until well combined.
Taste and season with salt and pepper.
Transfer mixture to a large serving dish, sprinkle with parmesan, and serve immediately with lemon wedges... and of course some crusty bread.

The Corner: If anyone has an interesting snippet they would like included, just email to: anniesinternet1@primus.com.au
All contributions will be gratefully received!



TRADING POST

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1 x LANDCRUISER GXL 100 SERIES Diesel 5 Speed White 1st regd Feb 2000, ABS, twin airbags, aircon, after market turbo system, ARB winch bar, IPF driving lights, Kaymar rear bar with swingout arms, King springs, Koni shocks, rear ARB airlocker, tinted windows, RWC supplied, 95,000kms, VGC, **\$47,800.**

5 x 100 SERIES FACTORY GXL STEEL RIMS to suit live axle, new, gunmetal grey powdercoated, EC, **\$400.00.**

Contact: Ashley on 0438 600904



**STEREO
974**

Four Wheel Drive Radio Show
"Talking Four Wheel Drive"
Saturdays at 10.00m



Four Wheel Drive Victoria 'e' News
at www.fwdvictoria.org.au

Yahoo Groups

Sign yourself up as a Yahoo user at
<http://groups.yahoo.com>
(There is no charge for this service.)

Then go to
<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
anthony@ctsmoash.com.au

FORTHCOMING TRIPS

LERDERDERG DAY TRIP

Date: Sunday 13 February 2005
Trip Leader: Anthony Van Buiten
Contact Nos: Mob: 0413 784 074 H: 9764 3381
Destination: Lerderderg State Park
Meeting Time/Place: 9.00am, Shell Service Station (before Westgate Bridge)
Vehicle Limit: *Min:* 2, *Max:* 10
Grade: *Wet:* Medium *Dry:* Medium
Approximate Kms: 60
Equipment: Standard recovery gear.
Maps: N/A
Radio Channel: Channel 12
Trip Activities: Explore the Lerderderg State Park.

LABOUR DAY LONG WEEKEND – BUCHAN CAVES

Date: Friday 11 to Monday 14 March 2005
Trip Leader: Anthony Van Buiten
Contact Nos: Mob: 0413 784 074 H: 9764 3381
Destination: Buchan
Meeting Time/Place: TBC:
Vehicle Limit: *Min:* 1, *Max:* 10. Maximum of 10 on cave tour.
Grade: *Wet:* Easy. *Dry:* Easy.
Approximate Kms: 325 kms.
Last available fuel: Buchan.
Equipment: Standard recovery.
Maps: N/A.
Radio Channel: Channel 12
Trip Activities: This trip will be to the Buchan area to explore the caves. I have contacted a local guide who will take us caving for 2hrs at \$30pp or \$35pp if overalls are supplied. For those who are not as adventurous, the Buchan Caves Reserve conduct guided tours through two lit caves with hand rails. This is also an excellent picnic ground so we will probably take the opportunity to have lunch there. Note that we are now planning to camp at Buchan Caves Reserve. Unpowered sites \$16.50 (1-3 persons); extra persons over 10 yrs \$3.50 p/n. I will need definite numbers by 14th of Feb and a \$10 deposit by the same date to secure our booking. This is only if you are planning on the adventurous tour as bookings are not required for the other tours. We will also do a day trip and explore the area further.

EASTER – HATTAH-KULKYNE NATIONAL PARK

Date: Thursday 24th to Monday 28th March 2005 (some may stay on longer)
Trip Leader: Michael Rodger
Contact Nos: Mob: 0412 430 666 H: 9504 3839
Destination: Hattah-Kulkyne – somewhere on the Murray River.
Meeting Time/Place: TBC: 6.00pm Service station near the Westgate Bridge (Todd Rd Exit).
If you plan to travel up during the weekend, please ensure you make arrangements with me to meet. The

place we will be camping is quite secluded and may be difficult to find.

Vehicle Limit: *Min:* 2, *Max:* No maximum.

Grade: *Wet:* Impassible. We will be camping elsewhere.
Dry: Easy. 2wd towing a trailer no problems.

Approximate Kms: 600 kms.

Last available fuel: Petrol: Colignan/Nangiloc/Hattah
Diesel: Nangiloc/Hattah

Distance between supplies: 10 km from camp, 60km from Mildura (approx)

Equipment: Bush camping gear, basic recovery gear if you want to explore the area.

Maps: There are several maps of the Hattah area, most that I have seen have very little information and have errors on them. Best way to get there is follow someone who has been before (perhaps not Ashley!).

Radio Channel: Channel 12

Trip Activities: Watch the river flow past and occasionally jump in it. The Hattah Lakes are only a short drive from where we will camp, and Lake Mungo could be explored on a day trip. There are many great wineries in the area and Mildura is an interesting place, with art galleries and airconditioned shopping centres if it gets too hot. There are several other National Parks in the area that could be explored by the adventurous.

GEMBROOK DAY TRIP

Date: Sunday 10 April 2005
Trip Leader: Ashley Martin
Contact Nos: Mob: 0438 600 904 Tel: 9540 0007
Destination: Gembrook area
Meeting Time/Place: TBC
Vehicle Limit: *Min:* 2, *Max:* 10
Grade: *Wet:* Medium *Dry:* Medium
Approximate Kms: 100
Equipment: Standard recovery gear.
Maps: N/A
Radio Channel: Channel 12
Trip Activities: General drive around the area.

LOST PROPERTY

1 x MUNDIAL Cook's Knife
lost at Christmas Party
Contact Ashley on
0438 600904

1 x Pair OAKLEY Sunglasses
lost at Dargo NYE
Contact John on
0428 331211

Your help in locating these items would be greatly appreciated.

*Why did Ken keep his trumpet in the fridge?
Because he liked cool music !!*



TRIP REPORTS

NAV RUN

Friday 12–Sunday 14 November 2004

<i>Participants:</i>	John & Anthony	GU Patrol
	Joe, Carissa & Lachlan	GU Patrol
	Barry	GU Patrol
	Carl	GQ Patrol
	Craig & Paul	60 Series L/C
	Steve & Jill	80 Series L/C

Friday

Headed off from Officer around 1730 to Erica for a meal, then on to The Springs a few k's past Walhalla. Quite a nice camp area, plenty of grass and easy to find a spot for the tent. The wind was blowing a gale so we had a few drinks around a small fire and then turned in for the night.

Saturday

Dayback start to the day and if we had known what was to come we probably would have slept in longer.

John handed out the instructions and the fun began. After spending time studying the instructions and entering map co-ordinates onto the laptops, everyone headed off. The tracks were quite easy for most of the trip and it wasn't until later in the day that we got into some of the more interesting tracks. We spent some time looking for a few different sites that we needed to locate. Jill pointed out a couple of sites, but the rest of us decided they couldn't have been the ones we were looking for so we ignored them. (I hate it when she is right!) So we missed out on a few points. We stopped for lunch at one of the huts and were treated to a light snow display. Yep snow in November. After lunch we headed to Mount Selma Track that has a few fun sections.

Question: What do you get when you cross a long, steep slippery track with a very large tree and 3 four-wheel drives?

Answer: About 10 hours of winching!

John and Anthony had found their way down to the bottom of Lost Spur Track only to find a huge tree blocking the way. When they decided that they needed a hand, Carl went down to snatch them over the difficult section. That was the plan, but when Carl started sliding all over the track it was fairly obvious that he was not going to be helping anyone. By this time, I had made my way about halfway down the track and decided to stop and turn around. Too late! I slid off the track into about eight inches of clay based mud and wasn't going anywhere. Seemed like a good time to christen the hand winch that I bought about two years ago so out it came. At this point I would like to state that hand winches would have to be the best advertisement for electric winches that I know of. The progress was painstaking to say the least.

After a considerable amount of effort we managed to turn the truck around and have it pointing in the right direction. I managed to drive about 3 meters and then it was back to the hand winch. Fortunately Craig and Paul heard what was going on and came along to set up at the top of the hill with his electric winch. With a lot more hand winching we got close enough to join 3 winch extensions and 2 snatch straps onto the electric winch and the job suddenly got much easier. Thanks Craig. While the others continued recovering my truck, we began hand winching Carl's Patrol up to where Craig's electric winch could take over. John and Anthony followed behind with the winch on the Patrol needing a rest at regular intervals but it got them to the top. Oh, I forgot to mention the intermittent rain that added a nice touch to the evening/morning.

We eventually made it back to camp at 04:45 in the morning and I have no idea what everyone did because I went to bed and didn't wake up until 10:30. It took a little while to sort out everyone's straps, shackles and cables, then we packed up and went down to Walhalla for lunch and then headed off home.

For those new to the club this was not the way our trips normally end up, and winching on this grade of trip is quite unusual. This trip serves to highlight the safety of off-roading with other vehicles as well as the importance of carrying appropriate recovery equipment and having someone who knows how to use it. A big positive out of this trip was the way everyone showed great club spirit and worked together without any dramas, despite the difficult circumstances. I would also like to send a special "Thank you" to Jill for carrying bits and pieces up and down the hill and most importantly for not saying "I told you so".

Steve Boyle

BUFFALO RIVER (in lieu of Mayford)

Friday 26–Sunday 28 November 2004

Trip Leader: Ashley Martin

Participants: Brian Martin

Roger Baird

Barry Leitch

George Pledger

Tom Brachna and Robert Potts

Anthony & Aline van Buiten

Maggie Melcher

Friday

The track which leads into Mayford was still closed; the alternative area chosen for our annual fishing trip was next to Mt Buffalo River.

Meeting point was McDonald's in Lilydale on a glorious Friday morning at 8:30 am.

We headed off in convoy towards Yea. There is something special about going on a trip on a day when everyone else has to work! The sun was out, no more traffic jams and beautiful scenery. From Yea we went to Mansfield where we stopped for our last minute shopping and some had a bite to eat. Next was Whitfield. This drive was most spectacular, especially when we passed the mountain range on our right.

From Whitfield we took a right hand turn and hovered along a dirt road towards Buffalo River. To get the most suitable camp site we checked a few spots along the river and settled for the third camp ground. We arrived at about 2 pm, set up camp and checked out the river – for swimming purposes! A very enjoyable lazy afternoon was ahead of us, starting with lunch, lots of gas-bagging, a swim or two, and I collapsed on the banana lounge with a book. Tom and Rob arrived in the course of the afternoon. Late afternoon I saw some men trotting to the river, all looking very serious and all armed with their fishing rods. They came back, heads down, and guess what, all frying pans stayed empty and I heard some fish giggling. It is easy to be cynical, sorry boys, I didn't even try. I was glued to my banana lounge.

Anthony and Aline arrived around 11 pm (without the boys) while we were sitting comfortably around the fire.

Maggie

Saturday

Sat morning was absolute bliss. We woke up to the quiet that can only occur with the absence of children. It was about 10am by the time we got up and started breakfast. Most people were having a lazy day and very little fishing was going on. I asked if anyone was interested in going for a drive, but only Maggie was willing. We had a nice easy drive to the south of Lake Buffalo and arrived back at camp early afternoon. Still not much fishing had occurred. It was a hot day and most of us went and stood in the river. I took a fishing rod with me and pretty soon I had my lure stuck in a tree on the opposite bank. I think Tommy was looking for an excuse to cool down because he volunteered to go and retrieve it.



Since the fishing was a bit slow, Aline and I decided to try a spot we had camped at before where we actually witnessed someone catch a fish. It was a nice location, but still no luck catching a fish. Aline was most excited to spy a platypus and I managed to lose my lure. Where is Tommy when you need him?

We returned to camp to find that again not much fishing had occurred. Dinner came and went with the usual socializing and most had a reasonably early night. **AVB**

Sunday

After another successful fishing trip (ha ha), it was time to divide them up and head for home. We decided to go back to Mansfield the same way as we came in; the trip leader had this great idea to take this short cut, but as for those who know him he doesn't know his left from right so this was always going to end by reversing back and going via the bitumen. The trip leader was not lost, he just remembered to go via Station Creek Winery to pick up a few bottles of red for his partner (how nice!) so he had to turn around. There were a few who also did the right thing and purchased some wine for their partners. From there we made our way to Powers Lookout and had lunch. The rest of the trip home was easy and arrived home at a reasonable time.

Thanks to all who attended. Although there were no fish it was a very relaxing weekend. **Ashley**

P.S. The 2 bottles were presented to the trip leader's partner but her comment was "Thanks but you could have bought a dozen of them". You think you are doing a good deed but not always the case.

Editor's Note: Perhaps the trip leader should have pre-empted the partner's comment and purchased the dozen!!

DARGO

26 December 2004 – 3 January 2005

Roll Call: Michael, Verryle, Liberty & Elizabeth
 Jenny (Guest)
 Anthony, Aline, Riley & Connor
 Martin and Bernadette (Guests)
 John, Leanne and Stephanie
 Maggie
 Carl and Bethany
 Leigh and Anne
 Barry and Yvonne
 Ashley and Lesley
 Paul, Maxine, Madeline and Robert
 Steve, Andrew and James
 Derek, Janet and Bruce (Guest)
 Rosalie and David
 Ray and Dawn

Sunday 26 December

9:00am. Anthony, Aline, Riley and Connor, Bernadette and Martin, Jenny and us (the Rodgers) are all smiles as we meet at Officer Weighbridge. Most of us are wondering why we are here and not still in bed recovering from Christmas day chaos. On we go with Anthony in the lead. A quick stop before Moe for the kids to go to the toilet. What a queue – three buses all with the same idea.

Back on the track with Jenny giving us a running commentary of artworks around Sale. We stopped at Sale to replenish a few supplies and then onto Stratford before filling up with fuel and heading towards Dargo.

We arrived at Collins Hut for a late lunch after surveying the track and deciding that it looked pretty good. Anne and Leigh, along with Barry and Yvonne arrived later in the day.

Michael

Monday 27 December

The day started very slowly, even the children seemed to have a bit of a sleep in after yesterday's big drive and activities. Everyone emerged from their tents in shorts and t-shirts in anticipation of warm weather like yesterday. After a while the air got colder and the grey clouds looked ominous. It was apparent that there was not going to be any sunshine this morning. Everyone (except Michael) changed into long pants and jumpers. After breakfast, and a bit of a sit around, the discussion of a drive came up. We all packed up our stuff and headed off. Firstly we headed up Crooked River Rd and took the high track so that we didn't have to do the first (deep) river crossing. After that the river crossings were fine, although on one of them Michael decided to keep left rather than right and went in a little deeper than everyone else.



We then took Collingwood Spur track to Grant Town for a bit of a rest and lunch. Coffee was also on the menu, as we all needed a little warming up – it was freezing. The kids and Jenny found another way to warm up, they played chasey (this is energy no parent has). We then made our way to the mine shaft that was close by, on Union track, and had a small adventure walking to the end. Riley took a bit of coaxing to go in but finally decided that it was ok as long as he had a death grip on mummy's hand. We then discussed our route home and decided that we would head towards Dargo on the long windy and steep road down. On the way down we stopped at the cemetery and had a very quick look around, but made haste our escape as it started to hail (this is summer in the high country).

When we reached Dargo, Michael stopped for some fuel, we stopped for milk, and Martin and Bernadette stopped for a cappuccino; they thought they were getting one to go, but to their surprise this was not on the menu, they had to sit down and drink it quickly.

On our return to camp we noticed that our humble little homestead had grown into a little village. More NYE party-goers had arrived and set up camp. The rest of the evening was spent welcoming the newcomers and cooking dinner. Of course the fire was stoked up into a raging inferno after everyone finished cooking and we all sat around and shared a drink and chatted, every now and again we all dispersed when it rained but then we were like bugs to the flame and flocked back to the

fire when the rain stopped. Some people forgot to turn their chairs over in their haste to get away, therefore on their return had wet bums when they sat down. Good thing Carl had the fire nice and hot.

Tuesday 28 December

The day started a bit cold and overcast, just like the day before. Everyone had a nice and easy start just getting into the swing of things. Verylle had the best start of all with tent service for breakfast. This made all the other ladies jealous, but I reminded her that he may want the same the next day.....doh! Martin and Bernadette had the worst start to the day (in my opinion) they got up early and went for a swim in the river. When they came back Bernadette was freezing and she couldn't feel her toes. Good thing the fire was already going and she could warm up a bit and get the circulation going again. Late morning some of the men took off to have some fun and cross the rivers down Scrubby Creek.

Just before midday it was time for Martin and Bernadette to leave. They wanted to go out via the Pinnacles, so Anthony and I (and the kids) decided to escort them out as they didn't know the way and it is always safer to travel with a buddy. It was a nice drive, there was some interesting bits and some very steep inclines and descents. When we reached the Pinnacles it was freezing – there was very light hail falling, it was almost snow (not sleet). The caretaker came out while we were there and told us that it was -2°C last night there. We had lunch and said our goodbyes to the others and went our separate ways; they went for the walk and we headed down.

We saw the alternative route that was much shorter and got us to the track that we wanted and thought to go for it. It started ok, looked like it wasn't used much except for walkers, riders and maybe horses. That should have been our warning signs to turn back, but on we went. It was challenging getting down, there were lots of trees on the track, and some very rocky steps which were not appealing to go back up on. Finally the tree of all trees was resting on the track... then those fateful words came out of Anthony's mouth "we can make it". The good obedient wife that I am agreed with him as he was confident, I smiled at the kids so that they didn't see my fear and told them that all was well, Riley said not to go over it as "we will be stuck forever"... we should have listened to the words of babes.

We started with gusto and finished with an uhoh. We tried many things but nothing worked, we just kept getting closer to the other big tree that was still standing and was about to cause side panel damage to the car. The help call went out on the radio to Martin to turn around. Luckily Michael (back at camp) heard it and relayed the message to Martin to come back as we could not hear Martin answering us. They finally arrived and pulled us over – hooray!



Back at camp everyone was there waiting for us, Michael was going to give us another half hour before sending out the search party. Luckily we didn't need it, we should have kept in mind the first rule of four wheel driving, **don't go on your own**, something we should all keep in mind.

In the afternoon a few people went down to the river for a paddle and a wash, others sat around and mulled over the thought to start dinner. Everyone enjoyed their dinner and then it was time to build up the fire for that wonderful camp fire atmosphere. Anthony was on fire making duty (which he took upon himself) and made a Jenga fire pyramid which was doomed from the beginning and was destined to collapse... which it did. What a perfect evening: kids in bed, fire roaring, good company and a bit of refreshment... this is camping!

Aline Van Buiten

Wednesday 29 December

Day drive through the High Country:

John, Leanne & Stephanie
Michael, Verylle, Jenny, Liberty & Elizabeth
Anthony, Aline, Riley & Connor
Barry & Leigh
Carl & Bethany
Maggie

We had an early morning start and by 9am we were ready to roll for a day trip. Our convoy followed the Crooked River Rd (Randalls Track) which leads through a lovely valley along the river. Some lucky people had permission to camp on the private land along the river. From there we went onto the South Basalt Knob Track up to the Basalt Knob, where we stopped for lunch. An old train carriage was the centre of attraction, mainly for Riley who was the tour guide for each new arrival. The carriage was not in good shape, but it was a strong shelter for bad weather conditions.

The Blue Rag Range was our next target and it was most spectacular in every sense. The track went up and up, got narrow and steep. To add even more friction, sparks came out of the bonnet of my car. We stopped and the car doctors focussed on the problem. Easy (not for me), the metal frame that kept the dual battery on its tray came undone (on its first outing!) and rattled

against the battery, thus causing sparks. The boys fixed it with tape etc, etc, and it works ever since... thank you. That was a great relief for me on top of that mountain range. The track got hairier and slowly we climbed up to the Blue Rag Trig which is 1721m above sea level. What a view, amazing. Hotham and Dinner Plains could be seen. Some of the brave hearts wanted to check out the continuation/end of the track which leads down to a river, supposedly being known for good fishing. Being late afternoon, concentration on a low, and many (im-)patient passengers of all ages in several cars, we decided to head 'home'. Some of these areas we travelled through were hard hit by the bushfires. At times it was almost eerie to see the grey, silver tree trunks, some partly covered in new growth, some not. There were many new eucalypt trees sprouting up.

We back-tracked parts of the Blue Rag Range track and went onto the Dargo High Plains Rd. The boys could once again be of assistance to a stranded vehicle and its passengers. A Range Rover had a flat tyre, though the tricky bit was to unlock the spare wheel. Our help was greatly appreciated.

Back at camp, more buddies had arrived from town, Ashley and Lesley and Paul and his family. Happy hour, chopping fire wood, catching Bush Huntsmen, dinner and a great night on the campfire. In the early evening we heard this amazing scream "kill it" Liberty spotted a spider in the tent and poor Michael had to kill it and calm down the shaken girl. Guess who fell asleep first.

Great day, thank you all.

Maggie

Thursday 30 December

Another fine day in the High Country. Pity about the 'burbs.

The day started leisurely after a big day's driving yesterday. A sleep in followed by an early morning swim (Gentlemen's Hour) was had with all of the children enjoying the water, mostly with their fathers, as it was reportedly too cold for the women and they did not bring their bathers.

Derek and Janet, along with a friend Bruce (a POM) who is on a sightseeing holiday of our great country, had arrived to replace Carl and Bethany who had snuck off home.

This was followed by a leisurely lunch back at camp where a decision was made to undertake a short trip to the Dargo Valley Winery to stock up on supplies, where all that were in camp took a seat, including the dogs. Sampling took place and purchases made. Some were luckier than others in the price paid for their fare, and friendly banter took place around that.

This was followed by a short drive into town proper where food supplies (ice-creams) were procured. There was a shortage of parking spots in town and most HAD to park at the pub, and on shanks pony to the General Store.

The convoy then returned to camp at a leisurely pace (scattered) where the radio burst into life with the dulcet tones of Dawn "Are We There Yet?". The next we heard on the radio was from Daddio, "I have to get some ice for the drinks" from the Caravan Park.

Who then eventually arrived at camp? Adding to our impressive numbers: David, Rosalie and Polly; Ray, Dawn and Sally-Anne.

Camping sites were at a premium and two new ones were created for our latest arrivals.

After all the howdy do's it was now time for dinner, which had become spread out, followed by the evening's entertainment around the campfire, led by that fine entertainer ????????

Another MAGIC DAY IN PARADISE as one of our number suggested.
Leigh Pettigrew

Friday 31 December 2004: New Year's Eve Trip to Grant Cemetery and The Union Mine

Attendees: John, Leanne and Stephanie
Michael, Verryle, Liberty and Elizabeth
Derek, Janet and Bruce
Anthony, Aline, Riley and Connor
Ashley
Barry, Yvonne and Jake

We left camp mid morning and made our way to Dargo, where ice creams were on the menu for some.

We then headed up the main Dargo High Plains Road to McMillan's Track. Turning left onto this track we headed for the Grant Cemetery where we stopped for a while to enable us to wander around the site. It is sad to think that there is so much history at this spot, but we are unable to put names to the marked graves, apart from one or two. I, for one, would love to delve into the records and try and put some names on the marked graves.

After leaving the Cemetery we visited the site of the Grant Township where we stopped to enable members to read the notices and then to walk around the site. Most of the buildings are now marked with a little history about them, before there were just markers with the names of the stores, etc.

After our stop here, we decided it was lunchtime and we drove to the Grant picnic area for a rest and some food. As we were visiting the Union Mine which was not far from the picnic area (or so we were informed), and also there was not much parking at the Mine, most of us left our cars where they were and walked.



Anthony drove his car, as did Barry (which I must admit, I was relieved about – I would never have made it walking). Everyone donned a coat or jacket before they entered the Mine, because it was a very hot day, and so would notice the chill inside the Mine.

It was decided to carry on down the road from the Mine, as John knew there were other mines in the area. Unfortunately, we were only able to see the airshafts of several, but not able to visit any. We continued down this track until we met the McMillan Track again.

We made our way back along McMillan Track then turned right onto the Dargo High Plains Road again. We carried on down this road for a short time before turning right onto Hibernia Track. At this point Michael and his party, with the addition of Bruce from Derek and Janet's vehicle, decided they would head directly to Dargo whilst the rest of us followed the Hibernia Track before stopping to collect firewood. After collecting the firewood we made our way down Conway Track which eventually lead us back onto the Wonnangatta Road and from there to our camp site.

We would just like to thank John, Leanne and Stephanie for leading this trip, as we always find the Grant Historical Site a moving experience and enjoy visiting the area.

I thought I would just add a little bit about our floorshow around the campfire, as we were celebrating New Year's Eve. After we all enjoyed eating our meal together, and I did my little "floorshow" (I still have all the black bruises to prove it), we all gathered around the campfire and chatted and enjoyed each other's company until Bruce became our DJ for the evening. During this time we were entertained by the "Abbaettes" singing and miming to various Abba tunes.

The "Abbaettes" consisted of Janet, Anne, Lesley and Dawn.



I must say, the floorshow was excellent and hope we have a repeat performance at some stage in the future. We would just like to finish by wishing everyone and their families a Very Happy and Safe 2005.

Barry and Yvonne Hempston

CAPE YORK

The final chapter...

Day Twenty-four: Monday 26th July:

Musgrave to Bush Camp – Mitchell River crossing

To give maximum time for the Mitchell River crossing we were going for one of our earlier starts. Having cheated with accommodation, Geoff and Rochelle were well and truly ready by 7.30am. In a first they were able to stand around and be spectators in the sport of packing up. The troupe was back on the road by 8am.

The morning proved to be one of the hottest, and it didn't help that the Mitchell has a very wide expanse of exposed beach area. The keen got out of their cars straight away to walk down to the river edge to have a look at the crossing. Those even keener decided the route needed walking and were quite happy to get wet in their clothes.

The rest were trying to find what little shade they could to prepare for lunch. Geoff and Tom drained their back up supply of petrol into the cars. It was only a precaution but probably wasn't required in the end.

Despite the horror stories we had heard of the recent problems of crossing the river (it seems a few people were up for \$100 for the grader to pull them out) there seemed to be little challenge in the actual river crossing. The water level was well down (although Geoff did tarp up just in case), and there was an obvious good path to take which after an initial sandy dip turned into a good rocky base. That was of course if everyone followed the same path. George went a slightly different way and foundered mid crossing. The flow was quite fast and some water did find its way into the car before he was snatched out.

With the knowledge of a bush camp for the night a few people (Ashley, Steve, Jill, Kate, Geoff, Sue and Graeme) took the opportunity to have a bath in the Mitchell before heading off. The fresh, after swim effect, didn't last as long as hoped because, campsite scouts, Tom and Sheila could not find a suitable spot nearby. We had to head off down the road. Things were starting to look a little desperate and finally we had to choose a spot off the side of the road near a cattle dam, fortunately no cattle were seen close by.

Not quite bocce but a new game of bowling with the wild melons was developed.

Day Twenty five: Tuesday 27th July

Bush Camp to Karumba

There was an air of excitement in the camp as today would see the end of the grave roads for a while, giving everyone a chance to blow the dust out of their vehicles. Bitumen was a welcome sight as we neared the Normanton Karumba junction. Being the peak tourist season we wondered if we would be able to find a place to stay but we finally managed to book in at the Karumba Beach caravan park for one night. With not a lot to see around the town it was time to shower and to

secure a position on the lawn at the pub with the best view of the sunset.



And what a view, with the sun setting over the water it was a photographer's delight, needless to say the cameras were working overtime to produce the perfect shot.



And what a shot!!!!

With the sun set for the night, attentions turned to other activities like dinner, drinks, pool, darts etc.



Day Twenty-six: Wednesday 28th July Karumba to Burketown

Sue and Graeme left early for Normanton to visit some friends and to catch up with the troupe after breakfast. While at Normanton it was a last restock before heading off to Adel's Grove. In Normanton everyone made a point of seeing a replica of the 28 foot crocodile (largest croc caught in the world), there was also the Purple Pub and the Train Station/museum. Unfortunately the museum was closed, but being the dawdlers they are it reopened before Geoff and Rochelle left, so they were able to stay and have a look around. There were a couple of photos of when the croc was actually caught, showing just how large it really was. There was also the original train that used to run along the line. Although last to leave Normanton, Geoff and Rochelle caught up with the rest of the group as we had stopped to help a broken down vehicle. We couldn't get them on the road but we did contact the RACQ, who were going to come and get them (up to one and half hour wait though). Along the road we passed the memorial to Burke and Will's last camp, Camp 119. Not much there but a dedication plaque so we soon moved on. Once arriving in Burketown those in the lead waited for all to pull in while George found the caravan park. Geoff and Rochelle had previously broached the idea of staying just out of town, at Escott Lodge, but most seemed happy to kick back in town. Geoff and Rochelle did to head off and stay at Escott Lodge. (The lodge is a beautiful place which both highly recommend to anyone coming this way – heaps of camping space, lots of wild life, a fresh and salt river for fishing and even a little cheaper than the caravan park.)

Day Twenty-seven: Thursday 29th July Burketown to Adele's Grove

Geoff and Rochelle actually managed to pack up in time to head back in to Burketown and catch up with everyone there. A quick look was taken at the local sites, there was the hot water rock and then a drive through the salt flats to the boat ramp. Not much else to Burketown really.

As we got closer to Lawn Hill NP the scenery once again changed. Several people commented that it was more like central Australia than what we had previously seen in Far North Queensland. At Ade's Grove we booked in, there are two sections for camping, the main area which is individual camping areas, all neatly stone edged, or The Grove, which was where we were headed. Much more like a rabbit warren but a lot more shade. The only down side was the difficulty in finding a flat spot to set up the tent. It got so bad that Ashley and Brian ended up swagging instead of setting up the tent. Jill, Steve and Katie had to be the snobs this time round and camp away from us to find enough flat space for their two tents. Sue and Graeme ended up taking position in a walkway in the main camp for their flat space. It was a disappointing start to such a beautiful place, but most of the inconvenience was washed away once the creek was found where you can swim. There are of course fresh crocodiles living in the creek but no one seems to

mind. Not even when George, Tom and Sheila came back from a walk to report there was one sunning himself less than 100m up stream.

Day Twenty-eight: Friday 30th July Adele's Grove

Being the first day after travelling everyone was going for a sleep in, except of course Sue and Graeme. They keenly took off just after 7 to get in line for a canoe at 8am when they opened. We had heard this was the best time of the day to see them. The rest of the group slowly made their way into the national park at around 10. Tom, Sheila, George and Brian took off to do the walk along the two gorges while the rest went to see if it wasn't too late to get a canoe. Of course there was already people waiting and not many people coming back in yet so instead Ashley, Steve, Jill, Kate, Geoff and Rochelle headed off for a walk to the Cascades. This was only a short walk but due to a miscommunication Ashley, Kate, Rochelle and Geoff were waiting for Jill and Steve to return to the canoe area but they had gone off on another walk. Ashley and Geoff also took off on another walk, while Kate and Rochelle waited for everyone in the car park.

Some consideration was given to an afternoon canoe but it had become too hot, so eventually everyone returned back to camp for a late lunch. The afternoon was then spent whiled away swimming in the creek. In an impressive effort the boys did actually manage to flip the pontoon.

Day Twenty-nine: Saturday 31st July Adele's Grove

Geoff and Rochelle were first off the mark to make it down to the canoes by 7.50am. They weren't long followed by Ashley, Brian, Steve, Jill and Kate. It was definitely true that the gorge looks spectacular in the morning light.



Both sides are lit up and look beautiful with the reflections in the water. They slowly ambled up the middle and upper gorge, stopping at the top of the upper for a quick dip (and the usual ball throwing). While Tom and Sheila didn't arrive for the 8am start they did eventually come along to canoe the middle gorge. Tom felt safe wrapped up in a life jacket.

Sue and Graeme also returned to Lawn Hill to do the walk along the two gorges. The first lot of canoeists never saw them but they could confirm Tommy made it out onto the water.

Everyone headed back to camp for lunch but not everyone continued relaxing. A quick game of cricket was started up before another dip in the creek.

After such an energetic day, everyone enjoyed a very relaxed evening listening to Tommy's copy of Billy Connolly. Initially there was some concern about Katie's young sensitive ears being exposed to such humour, but that was soon forgotten as the laughs rolled on.

Day Thirty: Sunday 1st August

Adel's Grove to Mt Isa

Mt Isa wasn't that far down the road so there was no mad rush to get started. First stop along the way was Riversleigh Fossils, Site D. This large fenced off area takes a short walk around various sites of fossils found in the area. The main two are the "Big Bird" and a crocodile, although they are only small fragments of skeleton.

I think most people fell into the trap of having morning tea in the hot and open Riversleigh carpark. For future visitors here is a hint, just down the road is a beautiful creek surrounded by trees and would make a great place to stop. Unfortunately we all found out too late. Besides which, after leaving Riversleigh the quest for the black stuff became too much. We knew it was close, we knew the dirt and corrugations was nearing an end. There was a fresh fever in the group to keep going.

The road won though, we ended up having to stop on the side of the road, again with no cover of shade to have lunch. This also gave Geoff, Rochelle, Sue and Graeme the chance to catch up and the group to resume as whole.

And again the road won. It wasn't quite a dirt road, but you wouldn't call it a bitumen road either. And it certainly wasn't smooth. Every bump seemed to tease about the possibility of a completely smooth, continuous sealed road. There was a silent cheer of joy in all cars when it finally came.

To decide the what, when and where of Mt Isa everyone met at the visitors centre. This is an amazing new development to the tune of \$12M, and includes the underground mine tour 2/3 of the group were doing the next morning. Of course we couldn't stay there all day so it was time to find somewhere to stay. The closest caravan park was the Mt Isa, not a grand place but we fitted in (although it would have been fun to see the rodeo we were probably lucky we were a week early). The Petersen's and Boyles decided to get really cosy (surprisingly camping together for 5 weeks didn't deter them) and shared a cabin with one double bed and a triple bunk. Rochelle was heard to comment "age before beauty" on who got the double bed question. The other question of who got the worst deal, Geoff in the middle bunk, or Katie in the top bunk (unfortunately hot air rises) was left unanswered.

For most of the group the night was completed with a walk across the road for a pub meal. Geoff and Rochelle

stayed back to baby sit Katie, and make sure she didn't over gorge herself on McDonalds.

Day Thirty-one: Monday 2nd August

Mt Isa to Kynuna

Group 1: Tom, Sheila, Sue and George didn't do the Underground Mine tour so they had time to explore Mt Isa. They did go under the earth, at the Underground Hospital. Never a working hospital, it was built during WWII just in case. It was left to decay but in the last few years it has been restored and become a central tourist attraction.

Group 2: The other 8 got to dress up in funky little orange numbers for a couple of hours to be guided around a replica of an underground mine. Bill, the main guide was a miner, with many personal stories to tell. The second guide, seemed to be a jack of all trades, but had been trained up well by Bill to give a good display.

Once more everyone met up at the visitor centre, but some had become keen to hit the road once more. Others of course were just plain hungry. The decision was made for those to go on who wanted to and those who still needed sustenance before leaving would catch up in the next town. Maybe we should rename this The Town of Confusion, because the group did become a little befuddled. Four of the six cars did eventually get together, but the two leading cars couldn't be raised on the radio. After half an hour of quiet the 4 cars started to believe the other two must have kept going and began to assemble to head off again. Just as they were about to leave, a radio response was received from George. He, Tom and Sheila had decided to use their spare time to visit a local tourist attraction. So again the group headed off.

Further down the road we found the Walkabout Creek Hotel, made famous by Paul Hogan and the movie *Crocodile Dundee*. That isn't the main attraction though, they have EIGHT beers on tap, including the tasty drop of James Squire Ale. So again the group stopped, and as we hadn't heard from Tom and Sheila we wanted to wait for them to catch up.

Tom and Sheila on the other hand must have known something the rest didn't, because as well known as Walkabout is, it is not the pub to stop at. Although unbeknown to the rest of the group they continued on down the road to Kynuna (our next overnight stop) to the Blue Heeler Hotel. There was some worry we had lost them but they had well and truly found themselves at the coolest pub in the middle of nowhere. And by all accounts they serve a good meal (camping is free when you eat there) but the locals aren't that good at Pool. And yes, Geoff and Rochelle cabined it.

Day Thirty-two: Tuesday 3rd August

Kynuna to Longreach

Once again Tom and Sheila were keen to get going, although they hadn't gone far down the road when they returned to fill up with oil. Others were obviously not rushing because they still disappeared for a second time before all had assembled.

First destination of the day was Winton. There is a lot to see and do in this place. While the local folk of Kynuna dispute the story told by the Winton folk, they have built a fantastic Waltzing Matilda centre which Tom and Sheila visited.

Unfortunately for Geoff his time for visiting the sights was cut short with yet another session of tools out and under the car. This time it was an open exhaust. Once all back together there was time for one last quick stop to Arno's Wall (when you run out of room for a junkyard you build it into a wall) and then it was off to Longreach.

Longreach was the main destination as a lot of people wanted to visit the Stockman's Hall of Fame and/or The QANTAS museum. So the group broke up into the Boyles, Lynes, George and Brian visiting the Hall of Fame, the Corrigan's enjoying a leisurely lunch in the park, while the Petersen's accompanied Ashley on a tour of Longreach and its Caravan Parks (there's a whole 2 of them!).

Although there was a lot to see and do, the significant part of the day was dinner. Sue and Graeme were taking a few extra days for the homeward journey so they would be leaving the main group in the morning. This meant tonight was the group farewell dinner. Ashley and Rochelle cruised the town looking for somewhere suitable and chose the [??] Club. Again a cloud of confusion rained down on the group and the misconception was put out that the place was "just down the road" and we could walk. The pleasant stroll there gave everyone a chance to walk up an appetite and thirst, while the meander home gave us all time to devise punishments for the person who thought we could walk there (and Geoff to annoy Katie).

The highlight of the evening was a presentation to George, to say thankyou for all the hard work he put into organising the trip. Ashley said a few appreciative words and presented him with a can of Heavy (real Coke that is, not that Light - diet - stuff). Then the second presentation, which George had so kindly carried there under the misconception it was a present for Katie, was also given to him. I think the exact words were, "You mean you made me carry my own present here, you mongrels"! (Or something close to that.) He did however seem to appreciate the Blue Heeler Hotel polo shirt we had all chipped in to buy for him.

Day Thirty-three: Wednesday 4th August Longreach to Cunnamulla

They may have decided to take the longest route to get home, but Sue and Graeme are no slackers as they were off bright and early. The rest of the group weren't far behind, and the destination was the same, Barcaldine, to see the Tree of Knowledge. Some in the group were ignorant of the Tree of Knowledge but are now more educated in the beginnings of the Labour Party. Although, if Rochelle is to be believed, the real highlight of Barcaldine is the Stockman's Pie from the bakery. A light but crispy layer of pastry surrounding a truly meaty filling, with extra depth of flavour provided by the addition of bacon and cheese.

MMMMMMmmmmmm.

The drive there was a novel experience with cattle droving along the road. There is no rushing them, and if they want to cross the road in front of your car, then that is exactly what they will do.

You would never want to put a town down, especially one that provides such fantastic cooking facilities at their caravan park, but if asked one could say that Cunnamulla is a ghost town. There were no cars in the main street at all. It was a Wednesday night, but you would think there would be one or two people at the pub. There just seemed to be no-one around.

Day Thirty-four: Thursday 5th August Cunnamulla to Griffith

Originally the planned end town for the day was Hay. And there was not much else to but drive. Along the way Tom asked Geoff to check how far Melbourne was. And if only we could go as the crow flies then we could have been in Melbourne buy 6.30pm travelling at the speed we were going (around 95km/h). It made it seem so close.

Tom seemed to be thinking about putting in one last big effort and going all the way. Geoff and Rochelle thought that might be a little ambitious but it did get them thinking. By morning tea they had decided to pull out ahead and make it to Shepparton to stay with Rochelle's parents. This meant turning off to Griffith instead of Hay.

Despite one small hiccup, Geoff and Rochelle did successfully manage to pull into Shepparton around 7.30pm. If it wasn't for the very helpful people at the Mt Hope Pub they probably wouldn't have even got as far as the rest of the group. After following the signs through Cobar they found themselves on the other side of town without passing a service station. They did consider doing a U-turn and heading back but the Hema map Geoff was consulting showed fuel was available at Mt Hope, so they made the fateful decision of going on. They weren't the first, and they won't be the last, but I'm sure the people of Mt Hope pub haven't minded earning \$2 a litre for petrol for the past 4 years that the service station has been closed.

Day Thirty-five: Friday 6th August: Griffith to Melbourne

The remainder of the group drove home to Melbourne – arriving safely at respective destinations.

I'm sure all will agree that this was a fantastic trip and that on the journey home everybody's thoughts turned to when will the next adventure be – and to where!

A huge thank you to Rochelle, Geoff, Sue and Graeme for the brilliant job they did writing this very informative – and humorous – trip report.

Ashley

2004 Christmas Party

held on Saturday, 4 December at Gilwell Park, Gembrook



And a good
time was had
by one and
all...

