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From the President



The first six months has been a satisfying and enjoyable time. And I'd like to think it's been a time where, as an Association, we have done many things. Some of these things will manifest themselves over the coming months but some I'm happy to tell you about here.

Wayne Hevey, Colin Oates and I worked with DELWP Patrol Officers over the Labor Day weekend on an education patrol, and that was an eye-opener. I was with a young ranger in the new G-Wagon and on the first day we put out 7 campfires that were alight and unattended, and we took details from many people who were not doing the right thing. This included leaving rubbish around camp sites to driving off-road, including up the Avon River. We saw similar things on the last day of our patrol as well and the lessons for me were very clear around the need to educate people in the right things to do when camping in our forests as well as providing as much compliance support to DELWP and Parks to undertake these patrols to educate people. The message we gave was clear and most people took what we had to say very well. By the way, a fire is out when it is cold to touch and the only way to do this is with water, not soil.

We had a meeting with a number of land users as well to get an understanding of the Great Victorian National Park proposal and to see where others were on this topic. The evening started out with a little tension as you could imagine, however when all sides were heard, there appeared that there could be possibilities for a mutual understanding of the issues. As far as I understand things, this is not a proposal by Government but rather a proposal put by an interest group. They want to provide economic stimulus for towns and settlements together with protection of endangered species in the region where the loss of logging has meant small towns are suffering. I personally don't have a problem with this as the cause and neither did a lot of people at the meeting. What we did have a problem with was the proposed solution. The National Park solution will actually lock out a lot of land users from pursuing their favourite activities. This includes us. The argument that a National Park will provide additional tourism bringing with it economic benefit doesn't stack up if so many people are locked out from their usual pursuits. After all, they can use the area now. What we need is

a solution that brings tourists in but still allows the many current users to enjoy the activities they all enjoy. I think there's a lot more need for discussion and consultation before decisions are made, but rest assured, FWDV will be involved to represent a balanced view of our club member's interests.

The Board spent a day and night at Upper Yarra National Park recently where we spent time discussing our strategic plan. We haven't done this since 2013 and a lot has changed. Ken Robinson facilitated the day and we worked through a number of issues in particular discussing how we would incorporate our ongoing needs with the Strategic Plan we've developed together with our land managers. This task is obviously ongoing and I will be communicating the outcomes as soon as we have them in a suitable form for distribution. It is critical that as an organisation we become fully self-sufficient and less reliant on funding. At the same time we need to keep in mind the interests of our clubs and our members. It's a balancing act we can certainly manage.

The Rules sub-committee of the Board has also been meeting to discuss the Association Rules and they too are close to having a version ready for distribution. There are many changes suggested and some of them are major, however all of them will enable the Association to grow. Many of the changes tidy up the rules from the past and will mean less confusion and misinterpretation. These will also be circulated for discussion and if acceptable will be put to the next Annual General Meeting for a vote.

I'll finish here but would like to add that I mentioned having a President's meeting in May, however the weekends have got away from me and I'd like to spend more time in the planning. We will have a President's meeting when we have the crucial documents mentioned earlier available for distribution. We will however circulate a letter to Presidents with a deeper explanation of what we have in our plans to seek feedback and hopefully full support. Oh, by the way, I've also been spending time in the bush and travelling to marvelous South Australia and the Coffin Bay National Park – what a wonderful place especially if you like seafood.

Garry Doyle
President

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Dry Hills Track Inspection

Dry Hills Track is in State Forest in the Southern Alps area. It runs in a generally north/south orientation and parallels Moroka Road. From the northern end it starts at a point near Doolans Plains Road on the Moroka Road and ends near McFarlane Saddle. The track is only a few kilometres long and has no specific destination. For most of its length it is only a few hundred metres from Moroka Road. Some of the track has a solid base with some rocky components, however it largely traverses sensitive peatland.

The track has very little vehicle traffic but even a small number of vehicles are causing problems to the track and the surrounding peatland.

A report from Dr. Arn Tolsma from DELWP's Arthur Rylah Institute explains the situation.

"Peatlands have numerous important functions, including storing water, regulating stream flow at a local level, stabilising mountain catchments, filtering out sediments, nutrients and pathogens, and adding stuff like organic carbon to stream headwaters. So they are useful as well as pretty. Only trouble

is, being soft and wet, they are susceptible to a range of threats, including climate change, increased fire frequency, cattle, horses, deer, weeds, ski infrastructure, dams, roads and aqueducts.

There are some things we can't directly do much about, like climate change. Other things are well within our control. Vehicles, for example, can make a real mess of peatlands, like the one at Dry Hills Track near the Moroka Road. Because the peatlands are soft and wet, vehicles will form deep ruts that drain away a lot of the water that the peatland needs. Over time, the peatland will shrink in size, with bits converting to grassland or shrubland. The peatland can't function as well as it did, is more susceptible to weed invasion, and is more likely to be burnt deeply in any future fire".

Recently Wayne Hevey, Four Wheel Drive Victoria CEO and Greg Rose, FWDV Regional Representative, Southern Alpine National Park, were invited by James Noonan, DELWP Senior Forest Management and Roding Officer – Macalister, to inspect the track and view the current level of damage



and discuss solutions. Accompanied by Paul Brooker and Jeremy Reynolds from DELWP, vehicles were driven to the problem section and then an inspection was made on foot. The wheel ruts cut into the soft peat were very deep and holding water in places altering the natural drainage pattern.

DELWP have a proposal to close and rehabilitate the track and Four Wheel Drive Victoria, as a key stakeholder group with an excellent partnership with land managers, is part of the public consultation process.

Wayne Hevey, CEO, FWDV comments that;

"From a four-wheel driving point of view, there is no need for this track to be used as the Moroka Road takes traffic from and to the same locations. We acknowledge the damaging effects of vehicles using the track through observing what is a very sensitive wet area. We also thank the land managers for allowing the conversation to occur with the relevant parties present as stated in our MOU."

Greg Rose.

In brief

National Conference

FWDV President, Garry Doyle, together with CEO, Wayne Hevey, recently attended the National Body's (FWDA) quarterly meeting in Perth. Their aim was to both represent the interest of Victorian members and to seek a better understanding of the activities and finances of the national body. FWDV contribute approximately \$13,000 annually towards the running of 4WD Australia and the Board felt the need to ensure the Association's ongoing involvement represents value for money.

The conference was successful from the viewpoint of FWDV in that it

addressed a range of concerns that had been raised by the State Associations.

Of interest, 4WD Australia has been developing an insurance product to protect affiliated 4WD clubs and their members across Australia on the basis that a nation-wide product would be more cost effective than individual state policies. While the draft policy still needs fine tuning the Association's management believes that, if it shows a marked benefit for all our members, it will be duly considered.

RTO Courses for Telstra

The Association is currently conducting 4WD training courses for Telstra staff out of Mansfield. Interestingly, without

formal training Telstra staff are not permitted to use their 4WD vehicles in low range, and a blanket ban is in force on the use of the winches their vehicles are often fitted with.

Accredited driving courses have also been booked for the Game Management Authority in the near future, and chainsaw courses are once again on offer.

Prior to the content and structure of RTO courses being overhauled by the responsible authority, training courses were a valuable source of revenue for the Association. With courses coming back on stream and interest being expressed by large corporates like Telstra, management hope they will once again form a reliable income stream for the Association.

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The high level of partnership, consultation and co-operation between our public land managers (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and Parks Victoria) and Four Wheel Drive Victoria has been highlighted by recent discussions on the upgrading of Marathon Road in Central Gippsland.

Marathon Road runs from the Valencia Creek-Briagalong Road (just out of the small township of Briagalong) north to Moroka Road. From an elevation of 70 metres above sea level at its start the road heads into the Alps with a maximum elevation of nearly 1300 metres. At its northern end the road provides access to some fantastic tourist and four wheel drive destinations; the Pinnacles with the spectacular views from the unique fire observation tower, the iconic Billy Goat Bluff Track, historic Moroka Hut, the picturesque Horseyards camping area beside the Moroka River and walks to the falls in Moroka Gorge, McFarlane Saddle and the walk into Tali Karng, Moroka Range Track and the rocky four wheel drive track to the 1634 metre summit of Mt Wellington and Millers Hut.

An excellent round trip of a few days is to start after fueling up and buying supplies at Heyfield or Licola and spend a night at one of the many beautiful campsites along the Wellington River. These sites generally have a pit toilet and some fire rings and tables. The next night, camp at Thomastown or along Kelly Lane beside Shaw Creek. A third night at the Horseyards and then home down Marathon Road stopping for a coffee or a meal at Briagalong, Stratford or Maffra to top off a great journey. This route offers some fantastic scenery and some side trip opportunities to explore superb walking and four wheel drive tracks of varying standards and a chance to try for an elusive trout. The problem, however, is a short three kilometre section of Marathon Road. Nearly all the road is in good two wheel drive condition easily maintained by a grader. At Bleak Hill, aptly named if you are there in wet and snowy weather, the road narrows to a four wheel drive only section. While not especially steep it can be a challenge when it is wet and slippery. The track can become very rutted with some large rocks and slick clay to contend with. In dry seasons the surface tends to break up causing traction issues. There is also a Seasonal Closure, with a gate near the narrow section of the road. The Season Closure is due to the nature of the surface and the possibility of significant track damage if vehicles use it in the wetter winter months.

From a land manager's point of view the narrow and steep section prevents work crews quickly accessing the area. This is particularly important in times of fire, like the recent Crooked River fire. Heavy machinery has to be floated all the way round via Licola adding many hours to the deployment time and increased cost to the government agencies. The same constraints are put on emergency service vehicles. Two wheel drive access would enable police vehicles and ambulances from Stratford, Maffra or Sale to reach a search and rescue or accident scene quickly.

Wayne Hevey, Four Wheel Drive Victoria CEO and Greg Rose, FWDV Regional Representative, Southern Alpine National Park, recently visited Marathon Road with Jim Noonan, DELWP Senior Forest Management and Rooding Officer, Jeremy Reynolds, DELWP Forest Management and Rooding Officer and Paul Brooker, DELWP Forest Management and Rooding Officer. Discussions were also held in Heyfield with Beth Roberts, DELWP District Manager and Mike Dower, Parks Victoria Area Chief Ranger, Foothills and Southern Alps.

On site, the plans for re-routing of part of Marathon Road were discussed and mapping studied. It is interesting to note that on page 197 of the 1992 "Alpine National Park Management Plan – Wonnangatta Moroka Unit" it says, *"The section of Marathon Road which currently restricts the use of 2WD vehicles will be upgraded to all-weather 2WD standard, as a high priority"*.

The proposed route would cross from State Forest into the Alpine National Park managed by Parks Victoria and be

sensitive to the geology and ecology of the area. The rehabilitation of the redundant road section would be undertaken. The proposed route has gentler grades and would be easily maintained. The benefits in terms of better management and emergency access to the area would be enormous. In a bush fire situation the two wheel drive route would provide a safe alternative way out of the mountains for members of the public. With the economic difficulties the Latrobe Valley and Central Gippsland towns are facing; created by the Hazelwood Power Station closure, the proposed closing of the Australian Sustainable Hardwoods timber mill at Heyfield and the low prices dairy farmers are currently receiving for their milk, communities need all the support they can get from tourism. An upgrade of Marathon Road to two wheel drive, creating a round trip touring route, suitably promoted, would have lasting economic benefits for the Central Gippsland and Latrobe Valley regions. For four wheel drivers the route would provide rapid access to some of the best tracks and camping spots in the alps and could form a leg of longer tours to places like Wonnangatta Valley, Caledonia River Track, etc. It is hoped that the value of this proposal to land managers, tourists, four wheel drivers, emergency personnel and local communities will be recognised and funding made available for Marathon Road to receive the attention it needs.

Greg Rose.

Four Wheel Drive Victoria Regional Representative, Alpine National Park.

In brief

Government Representations

The Association has regular meetings with various government departments at the highest level. This ensures member's interests are considered when planning and policy decisions are made that impact on 4WD activities. A recent meeting has been held with the Honorable Lisa Neville (Minister for Water and Police) and a report presented to the Honorable Lily D'Ambrosio (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) regarding the contribution affiliated 4WD clubs have made through programs such as Camp Host, Clean up the Bush and track clearing.

As part of the Association's funding grant, a commitment was made to DELWP that FWDV clubs would contribute 2,500 man hours of voluntary program work over the 2016/2017 financial year. At present member clubs have provided 10,500 hours of their time plus another 3,000 hours that involved 225,000km in travelling to and from those volunteer activities. It is performance like this that underpins the ongoing preparedness of the government to consider the Association's position on matters that impact its members.

The Association is looking to revive the "Recover Me Please" program that was trialed for 18 months prior to 2012. During the time the program was previously in force, participating clubs received not only the warm gratitude of those they recovered but also earned valuable revenue.



Land Users Meeting

Our members may have heard of the concept being muted as the Great National Forest Park. FWDV recently facilitated a meeting of 16 various Associations and interested parties concerned about their ongoing access in this region. The Association is keen to have its members' access protected in respect of existing tracks that will be covered by the proposed Park. We heard that this Park is proposed (not from within Government at this stage) to reinvigorate the towns in the area since forestry activities have left the region. Our belief is that reinvigoration is an admirable objective and that we can contribute to this, BUT we must have consultation and seek a solution that meets the needs of all the parties involved. There is no decision by the Andrews Government in respect of creation of the Park, but with a State election next year it is undoubtedly a move where the Government could hope to gain some political mileage and improve its environmental credentials. We are aware that we need to be

heavily involved in this consultation and decision making process if it comes to fruition.

The Victorian Environment Assessment Council

Another example of the Association making its voice heard is VEAC. For those who haven't heard of this body, its role is to investigate requests by the Government relating to the protection and ecologically sustainable management of the environment and natural resources of public land.

The Association, represented by Michael Coldham, is one of 13 members that provide input to VEAC. This membership covers a very diverse range of interests including environmentalists, farmers, indigenous peoples, forestry, local government and tourism. Given some of these groups could be considered to have incompatible goals and policies, VEAC must surely experience its share of robust discussions!

FWDV and DELWP conduct joint compliance exercise

Over the recent Labour Day weekend

several FWDV representatives joined with DELWP compliance staff to visit numerous campsites in the High Country from Colquhoun Forest through to Swifts Creek, Aberfeldy and the McAlister area. The aim of the weekend was to demonstrate to the Association representatives the level of what can only be described as 'bad behaviour' exhibited by some members of the public and to seek the Association's support in DELWP's push for greater powers in dealing with offenders. Needless to say numerous examples of fires left unattended, inappropriate camping and rubbish left where it fell were observed. Where caught in the act, offenders registration numbers were noted and they were advised that if follow-up checks showed rubbish had not been removed or fires extinguished infringement notices would be issued.

FWDV General Meeting

The Association's General Meeting held at Warragul on 25 March 2017 was attended by 15 clubs. A highlight was President Garry Doyle's presentation of the Association's strategic plan for the next 5 to 10 years. The report was positively received by the meeting.





MELBOURNE JEEP OWNERS CLUB CELEBRATES 20 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Established in April 1997, the Melbourne Jeep Owners Club has just celebrated its 20th anniversary at a huge Jeep Muster over the ANZAC long weekend. Over 50 Jeeps gathered in Narbethong to drive the trails in the local ranges. President Rob Mackechnie commented "This weekend has been a resounding success, a true example of the Jeep lifestyle comprising trips, camping, social activities and camaraderie, all with the common love of life in the great outdoors and the freedom a Jeep brings to get there, and back. We had fantastic attendance from club members and their families over the weekend. There were also 2 founding members attending, now life members of the club."

Day trips over the weekend covered the full spectrum of skill levels, ranging from easy drives through the Yarra Valley, to challenging slippery hill climbs, rocky ascents, and the always popular night trips. Jeeps attending covered the last 20 years of Jeep four wheel drive production, with a large number of Wranglers (both TJ and JK), Grand Cherokees, Commanders, Cherokee XJs and the latest KL model. All well capable of tackling the terrain. The muster was based at the historic

Black Spur Inn Narbethong, a beautiful location deep in the Yarra Ranges, well organised to cater for such an event. Saturday night saw over 100 members enjoy a sumptuous dinner masterfully prepared by the staff at the inn, culminating in a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday" as a celebratory cake was cut. Also attending the dinner was club member and Four Wheel Drive Victoria Board Member Kathryn Mamara-Stewart, who presented the club with a plaque commemorating the event and thanking MJOC for its ongoing membership and support to promoting the four wheel drive lifestyle.

Melbourne Jeep Owners Club is one of the most active 4x4 clubs in Australia, and can be often seen in convoy heading off to some of Victoria's many scenic off road tracks. The club has many experienced trip leaders who run trips from easy and leisurely scenic drives in the country on easy and moderate tracks, to more challenging and sometimes extreme trails. Training is offered to members in the basics of four wheel driving, upgrading to advanced techniques, trip leading and other useful skills such as first aid and safe use of chainsaws. The club welcomes members with any level of driving experience, as it is through events such as this and training, that drivers can build their skills and truly get the most from their vehicles.



Melbourne Jeep Owners Club President Rob Mackechnie was presented with a congratulatory plaque by FWDV Board Member Kathryn Mamara-Stewart



Lunch break on a day trip during the Melbourne Jeep Owners Club 20th Anniversary Muster



Preparing convoys at the Black Spur Inn





RIP: Sean Thomas - Peninsula 4x4 Club



On behalf of Peninsula 4x4 Club it is with a heavy heart that I write of the passing of a good mate that so tragically died at the young age of twenty five on Anzac Day the 25th of April this year.

Sean Thomas was a great husband, and great father to his daughter and to his unborn child due in August. He was also a good mate.

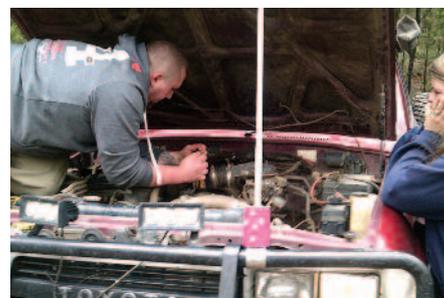
Sean was the sort of mate that was always keen to get out on the tracks, he was one of those types of blokes that was willing to give just about anything a go within reason, unless he felt it was too dangerous or would endanger his family.

He was a good bush mechanic too. I still remember it like it was yesterday whilst we were doing some of the MVO tracks at Bunyip State Park, when he blew the crossover pipe (80 Series Duel Fuel) off once again. He pulls over and calls out "who's got a spare stubby holder," then he asked one of us to grab the zip ties from his drawers at the back and dives under the bonnet; 5 mins later problem solved.

He was also the type of bloke that when someone was bogged and needed help he was not scared to get in there, get dirty and help out wherever he could. If on the other hand he got bogged he was always willing to listen to any ideas that might work to get himself unstuck.

Sean driving a Cruiser was never too shy to give the Patrol drivers heaps and could take it as good as he gave. One of the jokes I did hear one day was "(Q)What do you find on the second page of a Patrol Workshop manual? (A) A Bus Timetable."

I also copped a fair share of ragging as I drive a Zook (Suzuki Vitara) but I gave it to him just as he gave it to me. One time we decided to have a crack at a favourite bog hole, well I got through once, but Sean gave it his best with two attempts. Let's just say the score was "Bog hole 2, Sean 0", but he was not too proud to have a Zook get him out, even though there was another Cruiser there that could have pulled him out, but that's Sean for you, happy to ask for help when needed.



He was a member of our club "Peninsula 4x4" and being a young club, we may have only known him for a short time. However, after the time we spent out on the tracks, it felt like we had known each other a lifetime, he was one of those people that once you got to know him you felt like you had known him for such a long time.

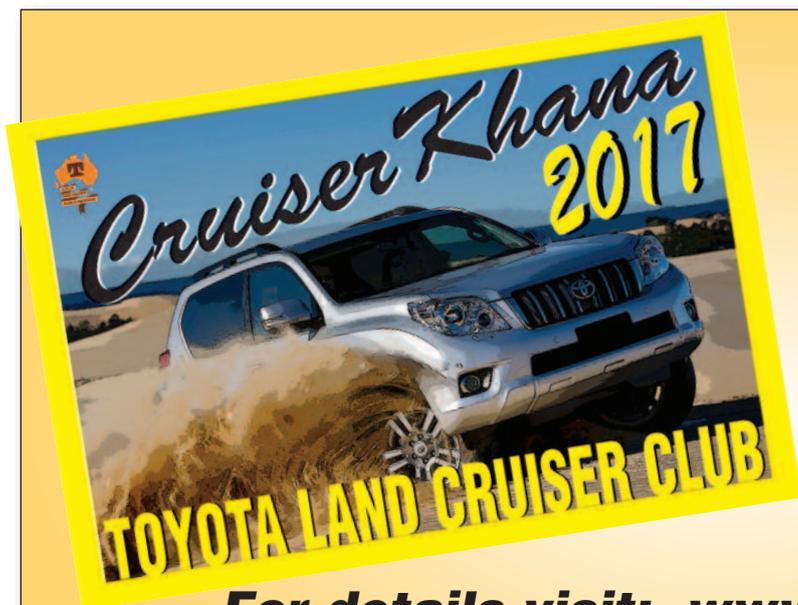
The times we spent out on the tracks was always a pleasure we would always egg each other on and if it wasn't us egging each other on it was our wives egging us/each other on, which would sometimes lead to some crazy things happening, but it was always safety first.

Sean Thomas we will miss you but you will forever live in our hearts, RIP Mate. Our condolences to Keisha, Tamara and Bump.

P.S. Mate, I hope you find some gnarly tracks in heaven and give them a good crack.

RIP - Sean Thomas
16/3/1992 to 25/4/2017

Robert Higgins
Peninsula 4x4 Club
Trip Coordinator.



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Lerderderg State Park Clean Up

Toyota Land Cruiser Club return for second clean up project

Continuing our community support, the TLCCV returned to complete what we started on "Clean up Australia Day." It was a beautiful sunny Autumn day when we met Parks Vic Ranger, Charlie, at Federation Park in Bacchus Marsh. We had a great group of willing helpers, nine vehicles in total.

Charlie led the convoy along the Blackwood Ranges Track, an MVO track running along the top of the range. Stopping a few times to check the fox traps, there had been a lot of activity, and as this part of the park is close to grazing land, Parks Vic are being very neighbourly and taking care of vermin. The last major fire in the Lerderderg was in 1983 and you can still see the scars on top of the range. 34 years after the fire, the eucalypts are less than 2 metres high.



In Lerderderg State Park, fires are only permitted in constructed fireplaces. Our

task was to clean up any we could see along the tracks; it amazed us where some people had lit a fire. Our first fireplace was at the top of Mt Blackwood where we found just a small pile of charcoal in the middle of the carpark. Whilst we were cleaning we had a terrific panoramic view of the You Yangs and Melbourne. We drove along O'Briens Road, stopping as soon as a fireplace was spotted. The children had a lovely time throwing the rocks back into the bush; some of the fires were very clean and we could just scatter the charcoal over the nearby bush, others we bagged everything as they contained a lot of glass, melted plastic and metal. The ground was raked and then covered in leaves and debris. As we left each site, we looked back and it was hard to tell where the fireplace had been. We left a few well-constructed rock fireplaces that were in large open clearings, working on the premise that if we took them away someone would quickly build another before the rangers had time to put in the concrete slabs for their fireplaces. In the large clearing beside the river on Amblers Track, we condensed a few fireplaces into one as we could see it was a large, well utilised clearing. On Upper Chadwick Track someone had made a large fire on a Dozer run off on a down hill slope, other fires had been made in areas that were heavily vegetated. Parks Vic are building a new campsite on Upper Chadwick Track, a large clearing beside Diggers Creek. Toilets are already installed, obviously already a popular camping spot, it won't be long until more people know about it. We cleared 4 large fireplaces and a few smaller ones. All of the children had a great day discovering tree hollows, fungi and paddling in the Lerderderg River. Although we had a task to complete, we all had a lovely relaxing day through some wonderful bush that is so close to Melbourne.

Alison Williams, TLCCV

TRACKWATCH CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions to Trackwatch are welcomed. They should relate to a club activity, interesting destination, historic event, etc.

1. Type your story in Word with appropriate paragraphs and headings.

No fancy fonts, colours, borders or imbedded photos in a single document.

2. Photos need to be of good quality and high resolution. Do not resize, crop or embed as part of the story. Send images as separate jpeg files.

Ed

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Did you know there is a Member's Login section to the FWDV Website? Every FWDV affiliated club member has a Username. If you are unaware of yours, please send us an email to office@fwdvictoria.org.au and we will reply with your Username.

Resources including Permit Applications for Mt Skene and MVO track access and Trip Leader information and forms are all available once you login. You can also keep your personal profile up to date.

To complete the process once you have your Username, just head to the website www.fwdvictoria.org.au type in your Username then follow the prompts as though you have forgotten your password. It's easy ... and worthwhile.

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4WD Mega Muster



4WD MegaMuster 22 – 23 April State Motorcycle Sports Centre Broadford

Dark clouds scudded across the skies and a chill breeze cut through as Myles and Dave arrived early on Saturday morning at the State Motorcycle Sports Complex at Broadford to set up for the 4WD MegaMuster. Run as a fund raiser for the Scouts, it was to bring all things four wheel drive together, and also to attempt to assemble the largest number of four wheel drives together at the same place and time. FWDV were invited along by DELWP in support of our growing relationship.

After we were shown to our site, which had been relocated due to heavy rain the previous day and overnight, we set about erecting the partnerships (DELWP, PV & FWDV) brand new marquee and setting up our display. This went up quickly and easily and looked quite impressive, with its printed edge around the roof. The clouds cleared, the day was warming, and jackets were soon dispensed with. The trailer was unloaded and the display set up. As this only took a couple of hours, it left the afternoon free to go and discover what else was around. Many exhibitors were still to arrive or were in the process of setting up. Although the numbers present were low, it was an opportunity to talk to those there, and do a bit of connecting.

In the evening, the Scouts put on a catered meal. Delicious melt-in-your-mouth roast and vegies with gravy, spuds in their jackets with sour cream, and oh-so-soft bread rolls. The convivial atmosphere around the tables, meeting with other club members and various exhibitors, and sharing in wide ranging conversations, was a fitting way to wind down at the end of the day.

But there was more on offer. A number of bands provided entertainment for those staying for the night, including music legend, James Blundell. By now, it was cooling, jackets went back on, and many stood around fires warming themselves, listening to the music. As the night wore on, most drifted off to bed, although there were a few who



continued beyond what was reasonable. Early Sunday morning, we applied the finishing touches to the display, when we were joined by Kat Marmara-Stewart from FWDV, Richard Wadsworth and Mick Appleton from DELWP Forest Fire Management. Mick brought with him two amazing "toys" which proved to be assets as drawcards to our stand. A Mercedes-Benz G-Wagen fire tanker, and a mighty Unimog. Standing nearly 12 feet tall and weighing in at more than 14 tonnes, this vehicle stood out "head and shoulders" above the crowd. Pyalong CFA also provided a Land Cruiser slip-on tanker for our stand as well. It certainly drew curious lookers who then were engaged in conversation about FWDV, who we are and what we do, our partnerships with various agencies, especially Parks Victoria and DELWP, and the clubs we represent. Although not overwhelming, there was a

lot of interest from the public about FWDV, and we kept busy for the day. The weather was warm and sunny and the people kept coming. Soon it was time for the world record attempt to be verified. Four wheel drives had been assembling on the track all morning, snaking their way around beyond the immediate line of sight.



The count came in. The record stood at more than 3,500, set eight years ago in Puerto Rico. Sadly the record was not broken, with just 343 vehicles being counted. Despite this, it showed the spirit that four wheel drivers generally show in community spirit in supporting this event. Who knows, if held again the record may be broken.

Although falling short of expectations on the numbers attending, it was a worthwhile effort in informing so many people about FWDV. Presenting the Association in such a favourable light hopefully provided the public with a better understanding the benefits of belonging to a club and the Association. Raising the profile of FWDV and strengthening our partnerships is only ever good for us all.





4X4 Aussie Action and

What happens when four Aussie mates jump in their 4WDs and set out across Australia taking on some of the toughest outback challenges?

Well, a lot of thrills, a lot of spills, and a lot of lessons learnt in and around some serious laughs!

Welcome to 4X4 Aussie Mates – the helter skelter world of Myles, Tristan, Jack and Sean, four likeable lads who love 4WDs. In this action-packed ten part lifestyle TV documentary the lads will show us just how great (and ghastrly) life can be barreling about across unforgiving terrain and camping in the middle of nowhere. Well, some of the time. Along the way they run into (not literally) some true heartland characters more than happy to share their experiences and show the boys a thing or two about

country life.

It's fun, heart warming, thrilling, and crazy at times, but 4X4 Aussie Mates will make for riveting viewing and be an inspiration for the younger generation to get off their phones and into this great country of ours. Filmed in 2016 and early 2017, the show features four mates travelling across Australia using car radios to capture their banter. The show is anchored and narrated by seasoned 4WD adventurer Myles Brown. Myles outlines upcoming destinations and challenges aka Jeremy Clarkson, with his sidekicks providing much of the antics and humour of the show. Each episode will have a feature 4WD challenge with accredited 4X4 experts giving critiques and advice in a younger, more upbeat approach than other current 4X4 offerings. Let's meet the main characters. Myles Brown grew up in a family of adventurers and explored vast areas of Australia before he could even say Australia properly. Myles' easy going charm makes him the ideal 'face' of the show.

Tristan Brown's been pretty much everywhere Myles has because, well,

they're brothers, though Tristan sees himself as the better brother; an all-round champion of a bloke. We shall see.

Jack Bennett is all beaches, flip flops and dreadlocks. He's a cheery tradie with a love for mates and off-roading. Sean Slevison is the wildcard novice who's learnt pretty much all he knows about 4WDs from TV.

Director Richard Brown is founder and director of Sunset Films, a not for profit production company which exists to help ex media students gain valuable experience using broadcast equipment. Richard has numerous highly successful television credits to his name, including two series of Pets Practice.



***“New 4x4 doc
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Mates: 10 out of 10 Adventure!



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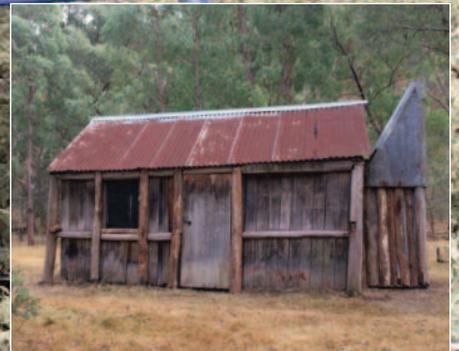
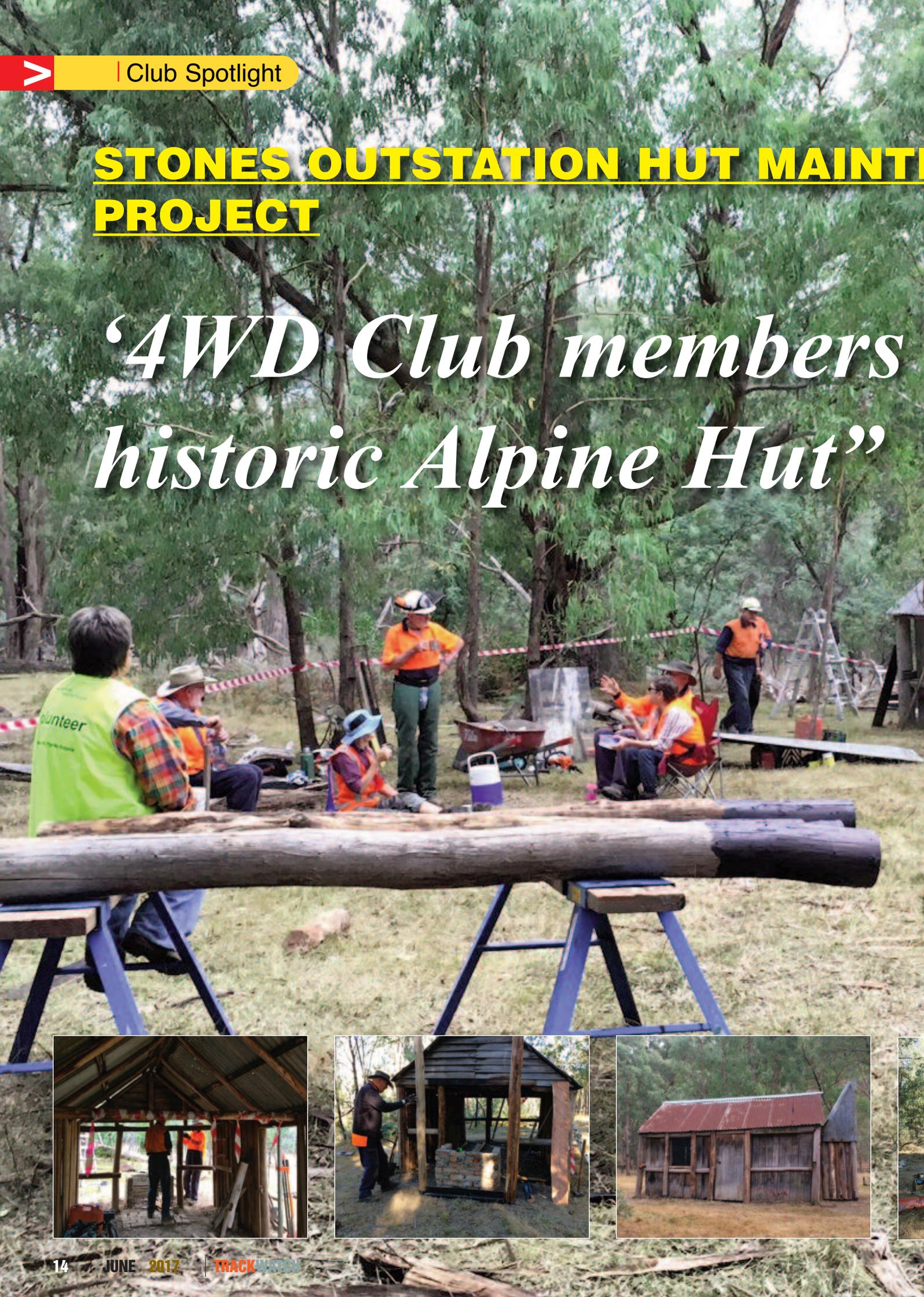
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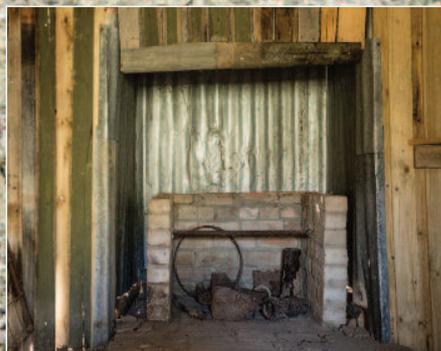
STONES OUTSTATION HUT MAINTENANCE PROJECT

*‘4WD Club members
historic Alpine Hut’*



ENANCE

restore



Brief History: Stones Outstation is included in the Victorian Heritage Database and was built in the 1890's. The outstation hut is constructed of timber palings lining the inside of a notched framework, with a corrugated iron roof. It remains a fine example of bush carpentry.

The Stone family's grazing property in the late nineteenth century extended from the Collier Bay area to *Italian Gully* (off Stone Bay). The family home was on Perfect Cure Creek and they also had an outstation and stockyards at Station Creek. It is recorded that Tom Stone would ride out from Alexandra by a horse drawn dray along the Devil's River Road and on to Skyline Road to Mr Luke Doyle's property. There he would unhitch the dray and ride the horse (with enough supplies for a few days) to stay at the outstation. He would muster his cattle into the stockyards* to engage in any cattle husbandry necessary. He would repeat this every two to three weeks. (*Rebuilding those stockyards is being considered as a future project between Parks Victoria (PV) and the Victorian High Country Huts Association (VHCHA).

The Project: Members of the Idlers 4WD Club set off in glorious weather from a variety of Victorian domiciles on Tuesday morning, 14th March. After a rendezvous and morning tea at Alexandra, the Idlers set off for the PV Ranger's office at Lake Eildon National Park (LENP). The Idlers 'work crew' consisted of 5 men and 3 women.

Upon arrival at midday, and after a quick lunch, the obligatory *Job Safety Analysis and Emergency Plan* (JSA) was outlined by PV as the project in hand was to be in a remote part of the Fraser Block of the LENP, near Aird Inlet. Access to the pre-selected campsite, being itself some 400 metres from the Hut site, was by travelling along 7.3km of mostly 'blue' track with sections also being rated 'black', especially considering that all vehicles were towing camper trailers plus they were carrying equipment on roof racks. The terrain of the MVO tracks, viz the *Blowhard Spur Track*, *Devass Gully Track*, and *Aird Inlet Track* are not what you would wish to encounter after a period of wet or windy weather.

Preparatory work had been carried out by PV during 2016 by accessing a number of suitable species type and sized logs required for the reconstruction. Whilst Idlers were volunteering at Fraser (LENP) during October 2016, access to those logs (for the purpose of de-barking and shifting them to site) was achieved by using PV's own boat because of the adverse track conditions at the time. Because of PV's concern for the environment, a 'Port-a-Loo' was provided for Idlers' convenience,

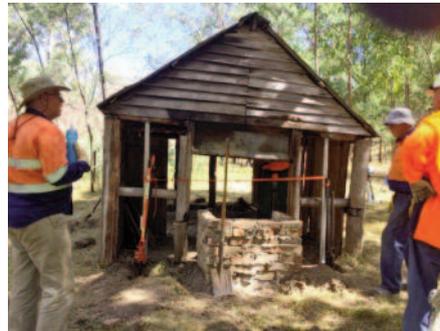
BUT a mainstay of Idlers existence, happy hour around the campfire, was snuffed out because of the fire restrictions.

Wednesday: Following an 'on site' audit conducted by PV's Project Manager, all materials and equipment were carried to the Hut ready for the start of some very serious work. Although remedial work had been carried out on the Hut by other groups in 2002, 2003 and 2007, the unavailability of the correct enduring timber species was proving detrimental to the Hut's survival. In particular, the very original chimney was 'on its way out', and took very little effort to dismantle. With the aid of specialist VHCHA propping equipment, the east wall was secured with new posts prepared and fitted after the ladies had firstly treated them against wood rot. All salvageable palings that had been removed to access the structural timbers were de-nailed ready for re-use. Two Perspex panels were removed ready for cutting to shape for future refitting as 'windows' to more reflect the 1890's.

Thursday: It was now time to replace the middle timbers in the west wall and pull out the support posts holding up(?) the entire south wall. The propping equipment ensured that the entire roof structure did not collapse, but hardhats were definitely the fashion look for the day. It was imperative that the roof structure be tied down to the supporting posts as each one was installed. That was achieved by using pre-loved and rust-stained fencing wire (for authenticity) and tying a 'butterfly' fencing knot to secure each. The arduous job of cutting log into slabs ready for use on the chimney's external face started and continued for several days. The old door was rehung so that it could now swing open/closed and clear the brick threshold. After suitable temporary propping of the roof, replacement of a portion of the ridge beam was effected.

Another of the pleasant aspects of Idlers working with PV is the chance to mingle with the general LENP staff over a BBQ lunch. It is maybe only a small gesture, but it is an appreciated one that now seems to have become a firm tradition.

Friday: Because the timber structure of the old chimney was a total loss, it was imperative that the reconstruction be as true to the original as was possible. Post holes were re-dug in identical positions to the old and the 2 major support posts installed. Although a small amount of the metal cladding was re-usable, to make the replacement metal cladding look authentic a scheme was devised where a 4WD would drive backwards and forwards over the 'new' corrugated iron to flatten it out and then the ladies



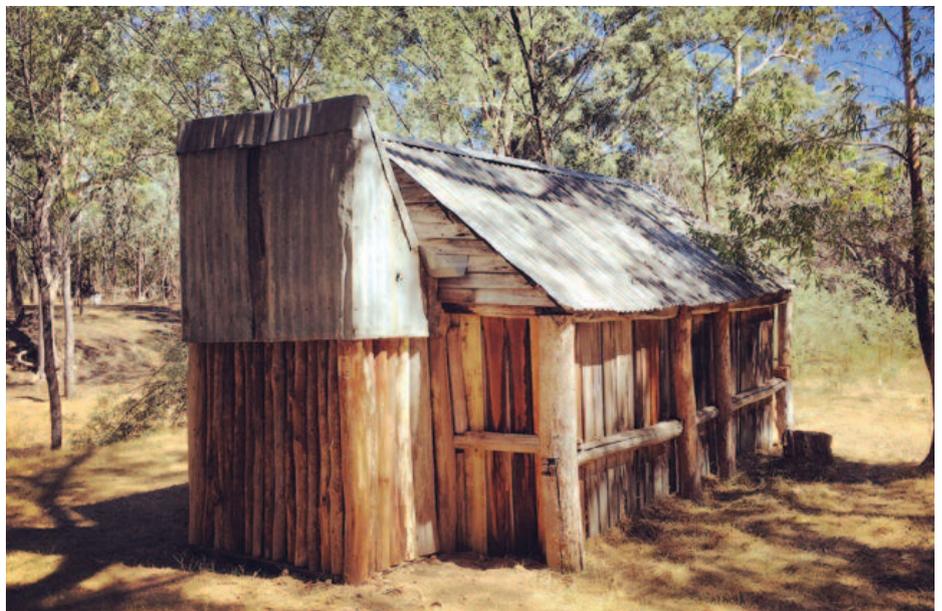
took to each sheet with a sledge-hammer to give them that authentic 'old time' look. When the need for even more pre-loved galvanised iron became obvious, an overnight trip back to Melbourne to source more was warranted.

Saturday: The ladies took to the 'antiquing' of the newly arrived metal with gusto after which time they spent several hours doing some track clearing/pruning with a PV Ranger. Upon their return, they put their minds (and bodies) to clearing the site of all the old materials that lay about. Meanwhile, the men got into the swing of things by building the chimney's timber framework and fitting the vertical split logs that were used to recreate that original nineteenth century' look. These were placed on 'sectioned out' horizontal logs as had been the originals, although nearly all trace of those had been lost to wood rot. The inside of the chimney was lined



with metal sheeting to protect it against unwelcome fires. Other sheeting was bent to shape in readiness for the next day's installation. Meanwhile, the internal walls had the palings re-installed to make the building 'habitable' once again.

Sunday: In view of the predicted weather for the following days, the fact that the project was now running several days ahead of schedule was a blessing. The arrival of the VHCHA Hut Maintenance Officer on the day with the hard to find (but matching) 'period' door handles was timely, with her partner then being seconded into replacing the fireplace paving. Meanwhile, Idlers put the final touches to the chimney, fitted the 'windows' and sills, fitted the metal grill to deter the use of the fireplace..... and lined up for the obligatory photo opportunity. After that, it was time to pack up the many tools that had found their way onto site.



Monday: Because of some overnight rain, we broke up camp early and headed for home before the tracks out became unsafe to travel on. All in all, a job well done by the following volunteers.

Idlers: Iris & Ned Cunningham (Werribee), George McBain (Geelong), Jean & Greg McDonald (Benalla), Maree Wells & Geoff Pontin (Hastings), Henry Verhoeven (Steels Creek) - team leader

VHCHA: Shez & Warren Tedford (Geelong)

Parks Victoria staff: Bonnie Abbottsmith Youl

Media link:

<http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/about-us/news/historic-hut-restored-in-lale-eil-don-national-park>



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- Tuesday 25th July - PC170729 - Theory
- Saturday 29th July - PC170729 - Practical
- Tuesday 15th August - PC170819 - Theory
- Saturday 19th August - PC170819 - Practical
- Tuesday 12th September - PC170916 - Theory
- Saturday 16th September - PC170916 - Practical
- Tuesday 17th October - PC171021 - Theory
- Saturday 21st October - PC17021 - Practical
- Tuesday 14th November - PC171118 - Theory
- Saturday 18th November - PC171118 - Practical
- Tuesday 1st December - PC171202 - Theory
- Saturday 2nd December - PC171202 - Practical

WINTER DRIVING COURSE



- Friday 4th August - PC170806
- Saturday 5th August - PC170806
- Sunday 6th August - PC170806

Training Course Refund Policy

Situations occur where for various reasons courses are cancelled by Four Wheel Drive Victoria (FWDV) or students need to cancel. Below describes the refund policy that is applicable.

Fee refunds: If students are unable to attend the course that they are registered for, the following refund fees below apply:

- 30 days prior - less 10% of course cost; • 29 days - 15 days - less 25% of course cost; • 14 days to 8 days - less 50% of course cost; • 7 days prior - no refund allowed

Refund applications must be made in writing to FWDV.

FWDV agree that they will allow for one transfer in a 12 month period to another course date without penalty, with a minimum of 8 days notice, (see below).

Transfer to other courses: Students can transfer to any other course up to 8 working days prior to commencement at no cost. Students transferring to another course 7 working days or less prior to commencement will be required to pay a transfer fee of \$50

Course Cancellations: FWDV will make a full refund of all fees paid should a course be discontinued. FWDV reserves the right to cancel a course if a minimum number of participants are not achieved or for Occupational Health and Safety reasons. Should the students desire to take an alternative course with FWDV, fees will be fully transferrable to that course, for one transfer in a 12 month period. In the event of a course for which the student was enrolled being unavailable or no acceptable alternative course is available, fees are fully refundable.

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AUSTRALIA DAY 2017

Iconic Tracks Victorian High Country

9.00am Australia Day Thursday morning, Mark, Kim, Charlotte and Taylor Delosa, Erin & Gibbo Duff, Shane and Erynne leave Action 4WD Warragul headed for Eaglevale campground on the Wonnangatta River. The plan was to have lunch and to commandeer an area to set up a base camp. It was a pretty easy run in but a dusty drive down Crooked River Road into Eaglevale. Once we arrived it was pretty obvious we were not the only ones who had this idea. We drove from one end to the other for a quick scout and were greeted by a lovely lady from the Pajero 4WD Club who kindly suggested we should choose another area of the campground as 19 Pajeros were soon to arrive. We adhered to this advice and managed to snag the only spot left on the river, and not a moment too soon as plenty of others came in behind us. Once we were set up and eating lunch enjoying the sunshine we soon noticed a large quite healthy Black Angus bull was also sharing this beautiful campground. While it was a different and intimidating sight it was obvious if we left him alone he would simply stand in the shade 300m away and watch the world go by.

About 3.00pm Whytie and Grace made their way down Eaglevale track from Wonnangatta followed by a Subaru Outback being driven by life member Graeme Dowsett and partner Kerryn. It wasn't long before Whytie enlightened us about towing the Subaru over the

mountain with his 80 Series Land Cruiser. Shortly after Mark, Michelle and Steph Liddle from the Mildura 4WD Club rolled into camp via Tea Tree Track and Eaglevale Track. Thursday night was a pretty social night but most retired reasonably early while other more social characters enjoyed the opportunity to catch up.

Friday morning 8.00am we left Eaglevale to tackle our first iconic track, Billy Goats Bluff. The more social characters from the night before let us know they'd catch up. It took us approx. 35mins to get to the bottom of Billy Goats where we made some final adjustment to the vehicles and got straight into it, literally we were in low

range from the start. Because we left before everyone else sharing the campground, we got to the top and enjoyed the view for a while. The weather was perfect, we were above the clouds, sitting on a rocky mountain ridge as wide as a one way track with a sheer drop on each side, blue sky and through the scattered clouds the view of mountain ranges as far as the eye could see. A view some people will never get even an opportunity to see in their life time, while it may be in our back yard it doesn't let you take for granted what we've got access to. From there we headed onto The Pinnacles, a short walk up to the fire tower where you stand at an elevation of approx. 1500m



with 360 degree view of the area. You can see down to the Wonnangatta Valley and up to Mt Hotham on a clear day. Mark from Mildura managed to get enough reception to update the software on his drone and used the opportunity to get some footage. Not long before we left many others started to make their way up for a look, so we figured it was a good time to head down the mountain.

We headed down Castlehill Track onto Junction Spur, which we followed to Castleburn Creek Track. When we crossed the Castleburn Creek I noticed a splash in the water, we pulled up to investigate and discovered trout in the creek along with lizards sunbaking on the rocks next to the water. The trout were trapped in a reasonable size puddle with some rock crevices to hide in, so good hiding spots. Mark was unsuccessful in catching lunch with his bare hands but it was good entertainment for the onlookers. We stopped for lunch shortly after on the side of the track at the bottom of a valley.

We headed down Scrubby Creek Track and stopped to play in either the Crooked River or Wonnangatta River, (I can't tell the difference) but it wasn't far from Collins Hut. From here we drove up the hill to Crooked River Road, turned left and headed back towards camp at Eaglevale. We got to Kingswell Bridge and Whytie decided he wanted to take Conway Tk, Randalls Tk, Cynthia Spur Tk and Eaglevale Tk back into camp. Considering it was about 32 degrees Mark, Kim and the 2 girls decided a dip in the river was more appealing so they headed straight back to camp.

The rest of us followed Whytie up Conway, the Disco's both had some cooling issues climbing the steep track. Shane in the Disco 2 decided to turn back while Gibbo pressed on with a keen eye on the temp gauge of the Disco 1. Brett heard my radio calls on the way back down Conway Tk while he was heading into camp along Crooked River Road, so we conveniently met up at Kingswell Bridge and travelled into camp together, or inconveniently perhaps for Brett and Trish due to the dust travelling behind Erynne and I. It was about 3.00pm by the time the BT50 and the Disco got back to camp by which time all the Delsoa's were enjoying the river, and it wasn't long before the rest of us joined in. Dowsett had spent the day at camp building a solid set of steps from the top of the river bank to the bottom, which made access easy. About 4.00pm Bad Santa and Mapo turned up to join in the weekend adventures and by 4:30pm Whyties party had returned from their detoured trek back to camp. The camp fire was soon lit, dinner being prepared, spaghetti seemed to be on everyone's menu that



night. As always an enjoyable night was had around the campfire, particularly by those more social characters.

8:30am, we left the social crew in bed again and travelled north up Eaglevale Tk, along Cynthia Range Tk, down Station Tk and into Talbotville campground for a toilet stop. From here we continued north up South Basalt Knob Tk. This is a great track, it's challenging, rocky and goes straight up. The kind of track you don't want to have to stop half way up the steep sections. It was great to hear the radio communication was top notch. Everyone waited at the bottom of the steep sections and called each other up when clear. We regrouped at the helipad, and much like the day before Whytie and Grace appeared through the dust after a late start. We all talked about how fun the climb was then continued over Basalt Knob, which has an elevation of 1512m onto the Historic Railway Carriage for a look. The consensus was this carriage was originally a cool store as it has insulated walls, a metal shaft suspended from the ceiling, which looked to stock ice with drip lines heading outside and brass door hinges. It was generally more solid than other carriages of the same era.

We continued north up North Basalt Knob Tk which presented a tight gap through a fallen tree and some sharp switch backs that Mark Little's Troopy from Mildura lifted a front right wheel to navigate, much to the distress of Michelle. We had lunch at the helipad just short of where North Basalt Knob Tk intersects Blue Rag Range Tk. The weather was much the same as the previous day and great views of Mt Hotham and the Blue Rag Range were had. From here we headed west down Blue Rag Range Tk to Blue Rag Trig Point where we stood at an elevation of 1721. The views were remarkable as the trees were not tall which allowed for another



place with 360 degree views of the mountains. Being Australia Day weekend there were many people sharing the views and it would be fair to say the place was full with about 30 cars all parked at Trig Point. After about 20mins we headed east back along Blue Rag Range Tk out to Dargo High Plains Road.

We took a short detour left at Mayford near Lankey Hut just before King Spur Tk. It was worth it, there is a cliff to stand on top of facing north with exceptional views of Mt Hotham and the Dinner Plains.

We headed south down Dargo High Plains Rd to Dargo for fuel and a beer. After a chin wag with the bartender we headed back to camp via Short Cut Rd onto Crooked River Road. At the bottom of Billy Goats Tk we passed an 80 Series Land Cruiser with its front passenger side wheel collapsed and facing the wrong way; suspect another kingpin lack of maintenance failure. Serves as a reminder that our four wheel drives must be maintained to a high standard when continuously exposing them to the harsh environment we do. The next morning camp was packed up by about 10.00am. Most left for home but me and Erynne wanted to check out Dungeys Hut in Happy Valley. Unfortunately the gate to the private property has been locked and access to the exceptionally well preserved hut is permanently closed. It is thought the owner has closed it due to vandalism or maybe the preservation of the hut has been compromised due to the amount of traffic.

The weather was perfect for all 3 days, and because we were on the move each day before others the traffic was not too bad considering the amount of people in Eaglevale and Talbotville. I hope everyone had a great time and looks forward to doing it again. All in all the trip was a great success.



Mount Terrible Hut ReBuild

Mt Terrible is a mountain within the Great Divide, located to the south-west of Kevington, Victoria. The summit is 1,325 metres ASL and is often covered in snow during winter. Access is by 4WD or bike only. There are a number of tracks that give access to the summit. Mt Terrible track possibly the most popular accessed from the Eildon -Jamieson road. Newman's track also gives access to Mt Terrible, off the Jamieson /Eildon road near the Big River camp ground. There are a couple of tracks that run off the Big River road that will take you up to Mt Terrible Track. These are steep and can be slippery in the wet. Access to Mt Terrible is also possible from Mt Matlock. This is a very picturesque 4x4 trek across the top of the ridge line. Mount Terrible joins the track at Moonlight Spur and Ryan's Spur track. The original hut, believed to be built in the early 1960s, was believed to be burnt down by accident while people



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camped inside. All that remained was the brick chimney among a pile of rubble.

The former fire watcher's hut was used for accommodation for the nearby fire lookout observer until the mid-1990s. The nearby Mt Terrible fire tower is still operational at the site and is manned during the highest fire danger days. It is important to acknowledge and understand how the A4-4 Memorial Team was born; below is that story as told by Anthony Dykes.

"In 2013 after finding the long-forgotten Avro Anson A4-4 Memorial at Mt Torbreck, we felt very strongly that it was important that the 4 young men that died there deserved to be remembered for paying the ultimate sacrifice to ensure that we live the lives we live today - it was then that the A4-4 Memorial Restoration Team was born. Over a period of 2 years, 100's of fallen trees including some very large mountain ash were cleared to form an uninterrupted 2.4km walking track from Barnewall Plains Rd to the memorial site. During this project, an engine from A4-4 that was found some 300m below the memorial site was retrieved by the team and mounted at the memorial site as an additional tribute to the crew. Once completed an official commemoration ceremony which included crew family members, RAAF personnel including RAAF Roulette flyover, Nick McCallum from Channel 7 News and over a 100 people attended in what was a moving and very special service. The A4-4 Memorial team lead by Anthony Dykes put forward a proposal to rebuild Mt Terrible Hut. Their passion and knowledge was rewarded with the rebuild agreed to be carried out."

On behalf of the VHCHA a massive thank you to the A4-4 Memorial team for their work. Full credit to the A4-4 Team, volunteers and DELWP for the fantastic



rebuild of an Iconic Hut. This Hut should stand the test of time for many years to come and offer potentially life saving shelter in times of inclement weather. And of course, it is just an awesome place to visit and take in the breathtaking scenery of the surrounding Alpine area.

The following is the full account of the rebuild with all information supplied to me by Anthony Dykes, Shez Tedford HMO VHCHA:

"After the team completed the restoration of the A4-4 Memorial at Mt Torbreck, their workload decreased significantly and they were interested in taking on another project in the area. After several meetings with Alexandra DELWP Senior Forest Ranger James Cowell, it was decided that they would assist them with the rebuild of the once popular Mt Terrible Hut that was needlessly destroyed by fire late 2012.

Anthony approached the Victorian High Country Association (VHCHA) for their endorsement of the project as they are widely revered with their passion for the huts of the High Country. Initially there was trepidation by VHCHA to have it rebuilt due to the previous hut frequently suffering to vandalism, but in the end it was agreed by all that it would be a worthy project.

To get the ball rolling the A4-4 team applied for the 2016 Vic Forests Community Support Program as they were successful in receiving in 2015 on the A4-4 memorial project. They were again successful for this project to the tune of \$2,000 that would contribute towards materials for the rebuild of the hut. In the following months via the VHCHA Facebook page, ARB Thomastown contributed a significant donation that was also matched by VHCHA along with a donation of a truck brake drum pot belly stove for the internal fireplace. With funding and various materials secured, the build



began in mid-November.

It was previously decided that the floor of the hut was going to be a concrete slab which was always going to be a logistical challenge to get a cement truck to the hut site given all the tracks to Mt Terrible were 4WD. Utilizing the department dozer, DELWP prepared Mt Terrible Track by levelling out any ruts and drainage structures so the 15-tonne cement truck had no obstacles in its slow and steady journey up to Mt Terrible. The truck made it to the summit with no problems and the slab was poured and screeded by the DELWP crew headed by James Cowell and Luke Heard. They constructed the wall frames and roof trusses in the following days in readiness for the A4-4 team to have a crack on the first weekend in December. After arriving to a bare frame, they achieved the following;

- Assemble picnic tables;
- Construct stairs from the hut to the picnic table and fireplace area;
- Wrap hut in sisalation (insulation);
- Build veranda on the north and western sides of the hut;
- Build door and window frames;
- Clad all external walls with weatherboards;
- Install battens on hut and veranda roof;
- Build and hang door;
- General landscaping around hut and picnic area.

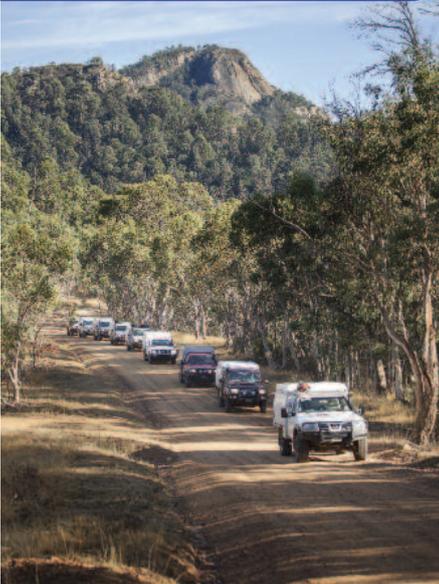
DELWP continued in the following weeks putting on roof sheets, guttering and internal wall cladding. The hut was finished in time for Christmas to be enjoyed by the hundreds of visitors it was to receive. Minor works continued into the New Year with the installation of a rainwater tank and the pot belly stove. The A4-4 Memorial team will take on the caretaker role of the hut in conjunction with DELWP and VHCHA. Thanks to the following groups and organisations for making the project happen.

- Alexandra DELWP
- Forrest Fire Management
- A4-4 Memorial Restoration Team
- Victorian High Country Huts Ass.
- Vic Forests
- ARB Thomastown
- Feast & Watson Timber Finish Products
- Cindy McLeish MP
- Artworkz

77 Years ago today - 16th May

On this day 77 years ago four young lives were tragically cut short. RAAF Flying Officer Anthony Daniel, Corporal Frank Hyland, Fred Sass & Ivan Stowdor paid the ultimate sacrifice when Avro Anson A4 they were flying in struck the north east face of Mt Torbreck 300m below the 1500mm. It wasn't until 9 months later that these men were found and closure finally given to their families. RIP lads. Lest We Forget.

Courtesy Shez Tedford



In late March the Wangaratta 4WD Club again staged the not for profit High Country and Beyond at Omeo in the State's north-east. Last year's event (Buckland & Beyond) was based in the Buckland Valley near Bright and given the relocation to Omeo and the wider range of High Country driving experiences on offer, a change of name was considered appropriate.

While the move from a bush campsite like the Buckland to the more civilised surrounds of the Omeo caravan park wasn't everyone's preference, the waste management restrictions etc. placed on event organisers made the bush option an impossibly expensive one.

Those issues aside, the number of 4X4's attending was about the same as the previous year with participants travelling from as far afield as South Australia and Queensland. There was an enjoyable

HIGH COUNTRY



Words & images by Robert Norman

mixture of day and overnight trips covering a large swathe of the High Country and those new to 4WD driving and/or not familiar with the area were knocked out by the range of tracks and spectacular scenery.

As usual the first night of the event saw everyone gather for happy hour followed by a dinner prepared by the organisers. After food and refreshments aplenty most participants turned in early, ready to hit the tracks early in the morning.

Bolstering the number of vehicles at High Country & Beyond was a contingent of Tailgate Campers organised by the slide-on manufacturers, Noel and Irene Ham, who are also active members of the Wangaratta 4WD Club. While not for everyone, slide on campers do offer some interesting and viable alternatives to traditional campers

– especially those who are into remote travel on their own or as a couple. At some time or other we've all had a trailer on tow and come across a track that looks interesting but also unsuitable for towing. What do you do – camp up somewhere and leave the trailer behind or just think it's all too hard and give it a miss? Another example might be thoughts of crossing the Simpson Desert as part of a larger Outback trip. If encumbered with a camper would you be prepared to park it up at say Mt Dare while you drive to Birdsville only to face a return trip over those 1000 odd sand dunes? It is in these situations a Tailgate Camper comes into its own. With a go anywhere capability and a 40 second set up time (as demonstrated on Tailgate Camper's Facebook page) they represent an arguably more user friendly option than say a rooftop tent.



Y AND BEYOND



Omeo Caravan Park

Given you can only be in one place at a time your author had to toss up between joining the Tailgate Camper group for a two day bush camping trip or the more civilised option of a bit of driving followed by wining and dining on a restaurant quality meal at Paynes Hut near Anglers Rest. A difficult choice but the chance to see how the slide on campers handled the High Country tracks won me over.

Our camper trip headed out past Benambra for a quick history lesson at the ruins of a home built by James Pendergast. One of the very first cattlemen to settle in the area in the 1830s, Pendergast built his homestead in the shadow of McFarlanes Lookout, a craggy granite outcrop popular with rock climbers that dominates the skyline.

Moving further east the group diverted

down the 4X4 dry weather only Limestone Creek Track for morning tea. Rough and rocky in places, the track descends steeply for 2km from the main road until it reaches Limestone Campground. This large grassy clearing is bounded on its western side by a rocky ridge that hides an extensive cave system able to be explored by the more adventurous.

Back on Limestone Black Mountain Road the convoy headed towards McKillops Bridge on good all-weather gravel roads and some bitumen. While the driving wasn't challenging it provided everyone with the opportunity of taking in the scenery - made all the more pleasant by the warm Autumn weather.

McKillop Road enters the Alpine National Park at Little River where we picked up a rough and rocky 4X4 track



that ran 4km to Hanging Rock. With numerous high erosion embankments challenging clearance and tight corners, this was not a place you would necessarily want to bring a trailer, but the Tailgate Campers took it in their stride. Arriving at a small clearing at the end of the track there was a bit of a view over the ranges to the west but if this was Hanging Rock the group was unanimous that it probably wasn't worth the effort. However, after following what looked like an indistinct brumby trail that led a short distance into the thick bush, the track opened out onto a rocky outcrop with breathtaking views off either side of the narrow ridge.

Leaving Hanging Rock behind us we followed nearby World End Track to a helipad that provided further expansive views.

Then it was back down the aptly named



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Rocky Range Track to McKillops Road which twists and turns as it follows the contours of the rugged, steep range. With nothing but fresh air off the side of this gravel road which is barely wide enough for two vehicles, you try not to think of the consequences of meeting a truck (or anything really) on one of the numerous blind corners. That said, the views over the Snowy River valley are awesome. McKillops Bridge campground was a rocky, uninviting experience where level sites were hard to find, but for our overnight stay it at least offered basic facilities. The nearby 255 metre timber-decked bridge, perched high above the Snowy River, is visually impressive and

has a history to match. Commenced in 1931 it was washed away by record floods in 1934 just before it was due to be opened. Rebuilt using arc welding, which was leading edge technology at that time, McKillops Bridge was then the longest arc-welded steel truss bridge in the world, regarded in Europe and America as an engineering wonder. In the mid-20th century the Snowy River was decimated after the Snowy Hydro Scheme reduced its flow by up to 99% but in more recent times environmental releases of water have breathed life back into the river and at the time of our visit it was good to see it flowing strongly.

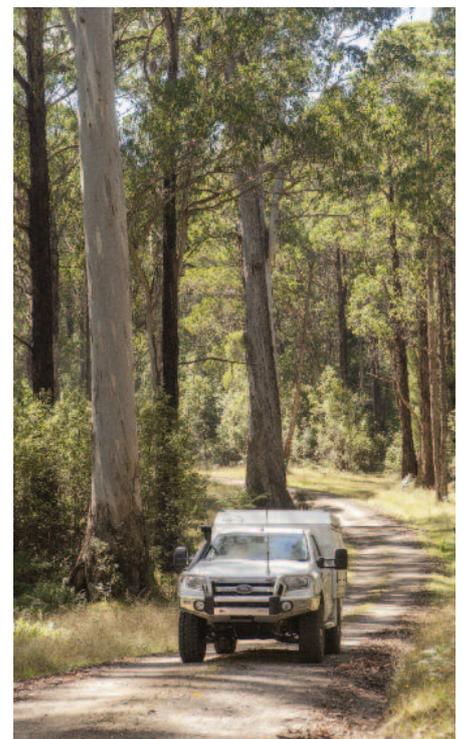
From McKillops Bridge we backtracked west, stopping to take in the views at Wulgulmerang Creek Falls and nearby Little River Falls before turning south to Glenmore Road near Gelantipy.

This track and then Nunning Plains Track proved to be a delightful forest drive that wound through impressive stands of tall mountain ash. Turning south into Nunning Road we dropped in to Murphys Hut, tucked away amongst the snow gums on the edge of Nunning Plain. While there were no brumbies to be seen on this occasion they can often be seen grazing here.

Our day and the trip ended after an easy run down to Moscow Villa, which has to be one of the most substantial mountain huts going, before heading back to Omeo via the

Washington Winch. When you consider the work involved in making an event like this a success, the organisers are to be congratulated given they had to do so without any sponsorship or other financial support. Regretfully, there is no easy answer to the funding issues faced by not for profit events like High Country and Beyond. Despite the blood, sweat and tears of volunteers wanting to create an event that has broad appeal to the 4X4 community (both club and the general public), without the ability to fund initial advertising and infrastructure costs, realising the event's potential will prove challenging. The organisers are keen to see *High Country and Beyond* become an annual event and it would be great if the Victorian 4X4 club community got together to ensure that this opportunity to showcase the 4WD paradise many Victorians take for granted grows, rather than evaporating as have other similar ventures.

Robert Norman



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Insurance comes in many forms...

Camping takes on so many different forms these days, from hiking and trekking to sleeping in the back of your four wheel drive to some pretty fancy trailers and caravans. But regardless of the accommodation of choice there is always going to be that awkward conversation as to what we should and should not take on our next exciting adventure away. There is only so much you can fit in ... right?

There are now so many options you have to consider when you head out on your camping trip and one must be very careful how to approach the ever so delicate topic of ... what to pack. With technology challenging us on every front, we face the daunting task of culling the list from the necessities of life (as we know it) to the bare essentials (according to whom...). Questions will be asked ... are we going to be in mobile phone range? Will I be able to upload my Facebook posts? How many chairs do we need? Can I bring my hair dryer? ... and the list goes on.

For most families, this topic is generally

reserved for the night before, or even the day of departure, as each member arrives out at the family four wheel drive with what they consider to be the most important items required over the coming days.

There is a natural culling of certain items as the squabbles commence often well before leaving the house, only to be superseded by dad, who by this time has prepacked all the stuff that he wants to take and he announces that there is only room for a couple of small items for each of the rest of the family. Mother then overrides that decree with the fact that ... well, just because she can ... and so it goes on.

In my case, there is now only the two of us (most of the time) so I have learned to be very careful, preplanning has become the key to an enjoyable trip ... Previously, even though the trip route had been well rehearsed, drive times allowing for the occasional scenic stop (a requirement the grandchildren somehow introduced) and of course the list from our previous trip of what I did not bring or allow to be brought, had made

up the majority of our pre-trip discussions.

Now, all this is in the past. Insurance comes in many forms, trust me, I have sought wise counsel from many on this. I have done my risk assessment and prioritised accordingly. Recently I gave my wife just what she wanted for her birthday, a portable toilet, it is now the first thing packed, no discussion required and at last we can travel anywhere at any time!

Happy wife, happy life!



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