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15-MILE HUT CLEAN-UP

15 YEARS OF TRACK CLEARING IN FAR EAST GIPPSLAND

PREPARING FOR SUMMER ON MT STIRLING

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REVIEW: FORD RANGER XLT

TRAVEL: GOOGS TRACK

4WD VOLUNTEERING GOES INTERNATIONAL



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From the President



The Association has by all measures had a successful and constructive year.

Financially we are in a strong position, and this is due to the diligence and governance of the board as a whole. On that note I would also like to thank Doug Mitchell for volunteering to join the board as our new treasurer. As an experienced accountant Doug brings a wealth of knowledge which will be an asset for the Association. He replaces Garry Doyle who resigned some months ago to get more involved with the National Association.

The financial position of the Association is also a reflection of the growing revenue contribution the RTO is making to the Association, particularly from commercial entities. The Board made a decision a couple of years ago to invest in the RTO with an external review of its compliance and training delivery, and has since employed a part time Training Manager. Thanks to the work undertaken by our Training Manager, we now have an RTO which is compliant in its training delivery, has automated its on line training registration process for students, has a pool of qualified trainers to call on who are paid as professionals, and is planning on expanding its training offering.

The Association exists because of its members Clubs and has done so for some 40 years. With around 90 Member Clubs the Association, which continues to grow, provides not just representation to government on four wheel driving, but club training, governance support, and track and access advice.

In return the Clubs and their members do volunteering work delivering a number of very successful programmes. Consequently the Association receives funding from the Government around the delivery of KPI's, which again have been achieved.

The other key focus for the Association has been as a member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee. This has also seen the Association invited to be a part of the VEAC review. With a Strategic Plan spanning the next four years, the Government has allocated \$10.5m funding, to support park access and use. The Association is working closely with the Land Managers in order to deliver the outcomes identified, which will to be supported by Market Research due to be completed shortly.

In summary I would like to thank not just the members of the Board for their contribution to the Association, but also our CEO Wayne Hevey and his staff for their support and commitment.

And finally our Clubs and their Members who are the Association. Without their support there would be no Association. Thank you.

**Michael J. Martin,
President**

*Wishing you all a
Happy and Safe Christmas break*

NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

Thank you to those members/Clubs that submitted articles for this issue of Trackwatch. Unfortunately not all could be fitted in, so some reports have been held over until next issue.

Regards

Brian Tanner, Editor

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Four Wheel Drive Victoria Wins at Regional Awards



Congratulations to all of our club members and families who participated in the wide array of volunteer work over the last year or so. Your hard work has been recognised at the recent Victorian Regional Achievement and Community Awards which were presented at the awards dinner in October.

The award we achieved was the Parks Victoria Environmental and Sustainability Award. This award recognised all the volunteer work performed by our many club volunteers with all the activities such as Camp Host, tree and track clearing, bush clean ups, high country hut maintenance, community support and many other volunteer activities.

Parks Victoria's Environmental Sustainability Award acknowledges individuals, groups and organisations that show a proven passion and dedication towards improving the environment and human wellbeing in regional and rural areas.

Every year hundreds of outstanding nominations are received for the Victorian Regional Achievement and Community Awards. People, organisations and businesses doing incredible work in regional Victoria and its communities are recognised through these awards.

There are nine categories in which semi-finalists and then finalists are selected. Four finalists compete for an award in each of the nine categories. The finalists from each category then compete for the overall finalist award.

The announcement of the semi-finalists and finalists this year was at the 2019 Regional Achievement and Community Awards Gala Presentation Dinner, held

at Flemington Racecourse in the Atrium. It was a delightful evening of recognition.

Four Wheel Drive Victoria has been a category finalist for the Environmental and Sustainability Award in 2017, 2018 and 2019. This category is sponsored by Parks Victoria. It was with great anticipation we awaited the expert panel of judges' decision to discover that out of the four finalists in this category in 2019, Four Wheel Drive Victoria was the winner. A key contribution towards winning this award was the 15,000 volunteer hours recorded for 2018 or \$500,000 worth of in-kind hours.

The effort put in by Geoff Kenafacke of the Mid Week 4WD Club to document these hours, from all clubs, is an outstanding contribution. Our thanks to you Geoff! Other initiatives include Camp Host, major "Clean up the Bush"



projects, track clearing, hut restoration and educating the public about "driving in a sustainable environment" at four wheel drive shows. Our partnership with Parks Victoria is one Four Wheel Drive Victoria wants to sustain as we work together to care for our environment.

The Environmental and Sustainability Award won by Four Wheel Drive Victoria belongs to all our regional clubs, our metropolitan clubs, our professional staff and to each of us who are a part of Four Wheel Drive Victoria. The contribution of each person who is part of our organisation is recognised through this award. It could not be clearer that Parks Victoria is pleased to have the support of dedicated volunteers who commit their time to helping sustain the environment.

Our grateful thanks go to the Award Partners - Bank of Melbourne, Prime 7, Weekly Times and the Victoria Racing club.

We sincerely thank Parks Victoria for its sponsorship of our award category. Our commitment is to continue our work with Parks Victoria, doing those things we do well together

The award presentation and winners were broadcast across many media channels including social media, The Weekly Times and Prime 7 regional TV network giving Four Wheel Drive Victoria's achievement wide exposure. You can check out the stories on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/VICRACA/>
and The Weekly Times
<https://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au>



Massive turnout for FWDV Annual General Meeting



Monday evening on 11th November saw a large number of members and delegates turn out for the Annual General Meeting with over 80 people filling the Springbank room at the Manningham Club in Bulleen. It was great to see many of our newer clubs represented for the first time as well as the regular attendees. More chairs had to be found to cater for the larger than expected crowd.

One of our esteemed sponsors, Icom Australia donated a UHF Handheld radio as a door prize as well as a cap and bag to be given away. Each club that attended had one entry into the draw and the prize was won by the Off-Road and Camping Club of Victoria. The prize was presented by FWDV CEO Wayne Hevey and received by Michael Dale and Edith Fullalove (in photo) and will be taken back to their club to be raffled at a club event.

A presentation from Peter Wright from the Midweek 4WD club was given about a unique charitable program that the club has been working on to send a fully restored Massy Ferguson Grey Tractor, plough, equipment and spares as well as a trainer to a needy community in Zambia. The next stage of the program is to raise funds to ship the tractor to Zambia. There is a detailed article about this in this edition of Trackwatch. Please contact the FWDV office if you have any ideas on how we can help this project to be completed. The usual formalities were completed and a new board member, Fred De

FWDV CEO Wayne Hevey presents a UHF handheld, donated by Icom Australia to Michael Dale and Edith Fullalove from the Off-Road and Camping Club of Victoria.



Gooyer from LROCV was newly elected and Dave Roberts from Toyota 4WD Club was re-elected to the board both as ordinary members.

The board now consists of Michael Martin President, Colin Oates Vice President, David Crainean Secretary, Doug Mitchell Treasurer, Kat Mamara-Stewart, David Roberts and Fred De Gooyer, ordinary members.

4WD volunteer

This story began in the little countryside community of Chikumbe in Zambia. This community has approximately 300 families, however. It is inhabited mostly by women and children. The vast majority of menfolk from the community have left and gone off to seek work in the city and unfortunately, they have largely deserted their families. Chikumbe doesn't have any commerce or industry and the inhabitants largely survive by subsistence farming, that being maize and sunflower.

A former member of the community, Hilda Loongo Nyemba later came to live in Melbourne. It is here, while undergoing a life-threatening medical crisis of her own, that she is befriended by another patient, Heather, undergoing similar treatment and a deep bond of friendship was formed between the two and two other women in their ward. They regularly meet in hospital during treatment, and it is reported that a lot of mirth and merriment ensues whenever they come together. They have a lot of time at their disposal, so naturally, life stories are shared as well as encouraging each other to live positively.

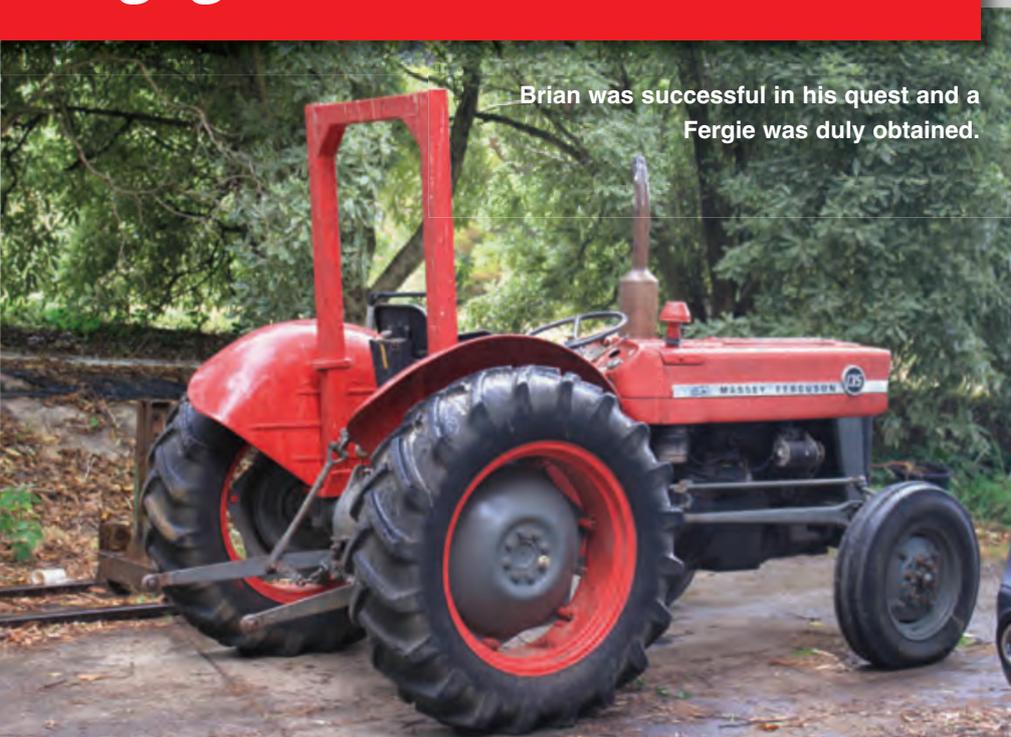
Along the journey, despite their own personal circumstances, they recognised other people also have their share of problems. The ladies have had the good fortune of wonderful treatment and they are able to return home for considerable periods of time, enjoy normal life and even travel. Heather and her husband Peter, are members of a 4WD Club and this is where Four Wheel Drive Victoria volunteering begins to take on a little bit of international flavour.

The lady from the little village in Zambia told her friend how she would like to do something for the people of her home village.



Peter, Hilda & Heather

ering goes international



Brian was successful in his quest and a Fergie was duly obtained.

The tractor would increase productivity and would enable a surplus of crops to sell in the major city market. Heather and her husband Peter decided to become involved. Brian, another club member (with farming knowledge) was asked to lend a hand by finding a little old Fergie Tractor that could be sent overseas. The Fergie was the tractor of choice because of its simplicity.

However, it was in need of some maintenance so the resources of the Massey Ferguson Club of Australia were sought. The Fergie was duly transported to Lake Goldsmith Steam Preservation Society grounds where the Massey Ferguson Club is based. Here, under the tutelage of members of the club, groups of school students from Alice Miller Secondary College at OopMacedon, have spent a week at a time, providing the bulk of the volunteer labour, to ready the Fergie for its departure.

A plough was obtained that could be suitably modified for the project was obtained. Our farming friend was given the job of modifying it for life in Zambia.

Appropriate spares have also been obtained. Brian will ultimately go to Zambia to teach the community how to use and maintain the equipment.

So far, the majority of costs of the project have been borne by Hilda.

Some might say that charity begins at home but I am deeply impressed by the spirit and compassion of the ladies despite their own problems plus the volunteer contribution of the Massey Ferguson club at Lake Goldsmith Steam Preservation Society, the Alice Miller Secondary College students and the

dedicated volunteer effort of those few 4WD club members who have, and are, still volunteering so much time and effort to make this overseas aid project a success.

Some logistical challenges still remain, the main one being obtaining a suitable shipping container and sea transport. If any reader is inspired by this story and would like to assist with a donation, please send it to:

Four Wheel Drive Victoria.

Donation of a shipping container with appropriate certificates would also be a tremendous help.

Meanwhile the 4WD Club Members involved, have also found time to spend on High Country Track Clearing with their club mates, prior to the seasonal reopening of tracks for the 2019-2020 summer season.

Geoff Kenafacke
Midweek 4WD Club



Alice Miller Secondary College students working on the Fergie at Lake Goldsmith.

Welcome to new Clubs

We Welcome 14 New Clubs to FWDV

Since the start of this year we have had 14 new 4WD clubs join the Association. Some have come back to us and re-affiliated and many are newly formed clubs that have come from Facebook or other social groups. Please make them welcome if you come across them out on the tracks.

New Clubs

Everest 4WD Club of Vic Inc - based in Kew

True Grit 4WD Club - based in Wodonga

4x4 Touring And Adventure Club Inc - based in Epping

Ararat & District 4WD Club - based in Ararat

GAA 4WD Club Inc - based in Glen Iris
Overland Expeditions Inc - based in Caulfield South

4x4 Torque Inc - based in Warranwood
HD Adventures Club - Based in Langwarren

Jamieson 4WD & Fishing Club - based in Ringwood North

Locked & Lifted 4x4 Club Inc - based in Malvern East

Mount Gambier & Districts 4WD Club - based in Mount Gambier SA

Re-Affiliated Clubs

Albury Wodonga 4WD Club - based in Albury NSW

Overlanders 4WD Club Inc - based in Ferntree Gully

Deniliquin 4WD Club - based in southern NSW

You can check out their details on the Club page of our website www.fwdvictoria.org.au

Social Media News

Have you joined our Closed Facebook Group yet? Keep up to date with the latest information for club members on our members only group. You can easily request to join via Facebook.

Our Public Facebook Page has now reached over 10,850 followers and over 10,400 likes and is steadily growing as we communicate the Tread Lightly and responsible 4WD and camping messages.



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Are you up to the challenge?

This annual event is organised by the Pajero 4WD Club of Victoria and has become one of the best and most challenging self guided, off road Navigational events in Australia.

The Pajero Challenge is open to experienced Four Wheel Drivers and experienced Navigators. All makes of 4WDs are welcome, but vehicles must be set up with good off road tyres and suspension lift to suit High Country terrain.

The 'Mitsubishi Motors Pajero Club Challenge' is a **24-hour** 4WD navigation competition, split into four sections, each of which allows approx. 4 hours of driving. The 2020 event will take place the weekend of 8th & 9th February 2020 in the Walhalla area, Victoria.

The terrain will be typical of High Country driving and teams must prepare for dry and wet conditions This is not a race because the objective is to make the least number of navigational/driving errors and gain maximum observation and activity points to win.

For complete details including entry form visit www.pajeroclub.com.au or scan the QR code on this add.



PAJERO CHALLENGE
2020





Melbourne Jeep Owners Club (MJOC) –

Annual clean-up of 15-mile Hut – Eildon State Forest

For the last 10 years MJOC have had a small committee who have arranged looking after huts in the Marysville area. These huts include Keppel's Hut, Ryan's Spur Hut and 15-mile Hut, in conjunction with the HMO from Victorian High Country huts and assistance from the land owners (DWELP and Parks Vic). MJOC complete several activities each year including: interior cleaning up, restocking wood piles, mowing and brush cutting, general maintenance and rebuilding where necessary.

On the 13th July a small advance party including 2 members of MJOC huts group and HMO from VHCHA braved the nasty weather and headed to 15-mile Hut via Rubicon state forest. We found several trees down and a large amount of snow, so thoroughly enjoyed the day of track clearing and snow driving. The hut was found to be in reasonable condition with a large mural painting in modern art on the back wall being the only thing that really couldn't be fixed the following weekend.

20th July the following weekend 4

members of MJOC and 2 members of the newly formed Everest club camped at 15-mile Hut enjoying the night and allowing us to have a much-needed fire going upon arrival of the rest of the group. The other 10 members of MJOC in 7 Jeeps came up from Buxton via Woods Point road, Eildon Warburton road to 15-mile hut.

This group didn't get to the hut till after 10:00am due to having to clear an accident on the road near Lake Mountain turn off. We needed all our winch skills to clear the road and assist the cars that had some bad front-end damage due to hitting a tree on a slippery mountain bend.

After we arrived to a clear cool sky the team got to work on cleaning up 15-mile Hut. We split into 3 groups and by the end of the day we had achieved an enormous amount. The activities completed included, digging 4 post holes and re-concreting them around the picnic area, brush cutting all the grass, clearing all the bog holes on the tracks and around the hut, clearing the

drains, cleaning up inside the hut, clearing the roof of leaf litter, filling the wood bin and clearing the paths at the back of the hut.

As per all Hut days, we all enjoyed time around the fire, a hearty morning tea and cooked lunch whilst chatting over all things Huts, Jeeps and Camping. We hope that 4wders and other bush users enjoy 15-mile Hut and understand that a lot of love and care is given by MJOC, VHCHA and its members in building and maintaining the huts in the Marysville area.

Thank you to all those who attended the working bee which included 4 people and 3 cars on the recce weekend and 14 people and 10 cars on the working weekend. It's amazing how much a small group can achieve.

If anyone is interested in Caring for the Huts you can contact VHCHA for all High-Country huts www.hutsvictoria.org.au

MJOC Huts Coordinator
Rob Sharp





'They came, they saw, they cleared.'
Fifteen years of 4WD club track clearing in Far East Gippsland

By James Lawson
Land Rover Owners Club of Victoria



One of the most significant ways that members of four wheel drive clubs can 'give back' to the Parks Victoria (PV) Rangers who maintain our parks for us to enjoy, is to participate in annual track clearances and gate openings prior to the Melbourne Cup long weekend, the main date for seasonally closed tracks to be reopened.

Driving commonly used tracks and clearing them of fallen trees or assessing them for other damage is an enormous task, which places a huge

burden on the limited time and resources of PV Rangers. It also takes them away from their other valuable work, and yet it is critical to the safety of the four wheel driving public. It was in this context that fifteen years ago, in 2004, the local Ranger in the Deddick/Tubbut area, Wing Hagger, contacted John and Prue Hasler through the Four Wheel Drive Victoria Regional Representatives Program to organise some track clearers at short notice for the Deddick Trail.



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John and Prue were a good choice to ask as they are experienced four wheel drivers as well as members of three different large 4WD clubs (Land Rover Club of Victoria (LROCV), The Pajero 4WD Club, and the Range Rover Club of Victoria). They were also, and still remain, the FWDV Regional Representatives for Far East Gippsland. That first year, John and Prue organised a small group of willing volunteers who camped on Wing's property near Bonang. In contrast, from that small start fifteen years ago, this year's track clearing event in the same area attracted some 48 participants, 37 vehicles and 5 Park Rangers! Track Clearing has now become the 3rd longest running event in the history of the LROCV (after the 4WD Show and the now completed involvement with the Murray River Marathon).

Playing a significant role for many years in the organisation of the weekend is

Tony Jambu, club member of the Pajero 4WD Club. So important has this activity become that some years three generations from one family have participated and some club members only maintain their membership so that they can participate in track clearing.

Critical to the success of the annual track clearing has been the support from the Area Chief

Ranger, Dave Burton and the other rangers who work the area as well as, more recently, the Tubbut community who have prepared a PV sponsored meal each year on the Saturday night or Sunday brunch for the volunteers. As well as clearing tracks, the activity has a number of other benefits. Volunteers enjoy working with PV Rangers as they share their knowledge of the area and it also exposes members of various clubs to some of the most beautiful and remote parts of Victoria they might not normally visit. John and Prue also liaise with the local community and provide feedback on track conditions and the prevalence and identification of various plant species, such as rare orchids to Parks Victoria. The hours spent by volunteers are also reported to FWDV to assist them in meeting Government KPIs and obtain some funding for the FWDV operation.



Over the years since 2004 a few things have changed. For example, the job safety briefings have become more detailed and the requirement for chainsaw operators to be properly trained and equipped with protective gear was

made mandatory. The number of National Parks where track clearing occurs has grown from just the Snowy River National Park to now include the Alpine National Park, the Errinundra National Park and this year the Croajingalong National Park. Now most people camp

at MacKillops Bridge campsite on the Saturday night as Wing's property is no longer available. Otherwise, the job itself has essentially remained the same. And, despite a few wet years where track clearing was slower than normal, it has only been postponed once when sleet and snow forced all volunteers out of the mountains. That weekend was rescheduled a month later and the club volunteers returned, willingly making the 1,000km round trip to Melbourne.

When asked about the future of track clearing, John and Prue said that despite their active involvement in leading club trips, sharing the bush with club members and their involvement in FWDV Regional Representatives, they are committed to arranging the annual track clearing in Far East Gippsland with Tony Jambu for as long as PV require assistance. With that in mind, we can look forward to many more



years of a well-organised partnership among PV, FWDV, club volunteers and the local community in the annual track clearing that is so beneficial for the entire 4WD community.





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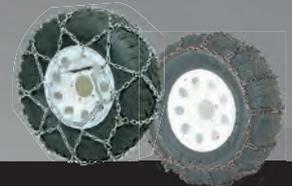
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2020

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PROFICIENCY COURSES



- Tuesday 28th January - PC200201 - Theory
- Saturday 1st February - PC200201 - Practical
- Tuesday 17th March - PC200321 - Theory
- Saturday 21st March - PC200321 - Practical
- Tuesday 28th April - PC200502 - Theory
- Saturday 2nd May - PC200502 - Practical
- Tuesday 16th June - PC200620 - Theory
- Saturday 20th June - PC200620 - Practical
- Tuesday 14th July - PC200718 - Theory
- Saturday 18th July - PC200718 - Practical
- Tuesday 11th August - PC200815 - Theory
- Saturday 15th August - PC200815 - Practical
- Tuesday 8th September - PC200912 - Theory
- Saturday 12th September - PC200921 - Practical
- Friday 16th October - PC201017 - Theory
- Saturday 17th October - PC201017 - Practical
- Tuesday 10th November - PC201114 - Theory
- Saturday 14th November - PC201114 - Practical
- Tuesday 1st December - PC201205 - Theory
- Saturday 5th December - PC201205 - Practical

Training Bookings Go Online

Four Wheel Drive Victoria have recently updated the booking system for our training courses and they can now be booked entirely online. Being a Registered Training Organisation (RTO 21605), all bookings can now be done via our website link. Both accredited and non-accredited courses can now be booked online and online payments will also soon be available.

Four Wheel Drive Victoria offer non-accredited Proficiency 4WD training and a range of Accredited 4WD and Chainsaw Courses. Check out all the details at fwdvictoria.org.au/training

Latest Accredited FWD Training

FWDV is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO 21605) and our training program includes a range of nationally accredited courses for those needing a formal qualification to meet employer requirements etc. The accredited courses are longer and include formal assessment of participants in order to ensure their skill and knowledge are to the standard required by the qualification. Once you have been assessed as satisfactory, you will receive a nationally accredited Statement of Attainment for the units you have undertaken. The program consists of the following units - FWPCOT3259 Operate a four wheel drive on unsealed roads, FWPCOT3260 Recover 4WD vehicle and FWPFMG3215 Perform complex 4x4 operations. More details and online booking is available on our website www.fwd-victoria.org.au

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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WANGARATTA 4WDC Track Clearing Weekend



The general plan, as for previous years, was to clear the routes around Wabonga Plateau and Mt Cobbler and down to the King River, where we would meet up with a team from the Mansfield 4WD Club working with Rangers Fleur and Billie from PV's Mansfield depot.

Wangaratta 4WD Club's track clearing weekend commenced as usual with a quick coffee at the Whitty Cafe in Whitfield on Saturday morning, before our briefing by Chris Clarke, Ranger Team Leader at the PV Whitfield depot. The general plan, as for previous years, was to clear the routes around Wabonga Plateau and Mt Cobbler and down to the King River, where we would meet up with a team from the Mansfield 4WD Club working with Rangers Fleur and Billie from PV's Mansfield depot. Because we had 8 members this year, we broke up into two teams. One, (the "A Team" with me) would tackle McMillans Track (a new one for us as it is an MVO track) before heading up towards Mt Cobbler via Basin Track and Lake Cobbler Road, where we would clean up along Little Cobbler Track, then head down Speculation Road to the King River hut for our overnight camp. The other team with Graham headed along Long Spur and Burnt Top Tracks towards Pineapple Flat on the King River and thence to King River Hut via King Basin Road.

This year we were fortunate as the fallen timber wasn't as extensive as in 2018; however there was still enough to keep us all occupied. Having a good number in each team meant that the work wasn't too onerous, although I think the A Team on the Cobbler route possibly had it a little easier than the B Team on Burnt Top, from all accounts! The King Basin Road was a little tricky in one or two river crossings and near Pineapple Flat, where some work was being done by PV and DELWP and the soft fresh surface needed more time to dry and compact. Luckily track opening isn't for a couple of weeks.

All teams from the two clubs met up late afternoon at the King River Hut and enjoyed a very convivial evening. Manfred put his culinary skills to good use with the bbq provided by PV, for which we were all most appreciative. Rain showers during the evening didn't dampen the spirits of the group; fortunately the tyre which needed changing courtesy of the last river crossing for Nev was swapped over before anyone got too wet!





The next morning the rain had cleared and after packing up we said farewell to the Mansfield club members and again in two teams, tackled Wild Horse Gap Track (the A Team) whilst the B Team cleared the Abbeyard-Cobbler and Williams Logging Roads on our way back to Whitfield. Again, I think the B Team had slightly more work to contend with (good planning on my part in selecting the teams and routes!), but we all met up and completed our trip with Chris at Bennies on the Rose River for lunch, before the obligatory ice-cream at Cheshunt on the way home. Overall, a great weekend as always with good work done, excellent camaraderie and enjoyable driving in supporting Parks Victoria in their work in our Alpine National Park. Many thanks to all the club members who participated.

A couple of stats on time and distance covered on the weekend: we collectively travelled 2350 km (not including a return trip from Melbourne for one participant), and spent 112 hours on clearing and 32 hours getting to and from home.





PARKS VICTORIA

Bunyip State Park Closures

Give the environment time to recover after fire for a better driving experience

Bunyip State Park is a favourite place for getting into nature and doing a spot of four-wheel driving, given its close proximity to Melbourne and variety of tracks offering varied natural environments. It offers camping, walking, horse riding and trailbike tracks and is home to many threatened plant and animal

species. Local residents, visitors and the four-wheel drive community were left devastated when, in early March this year, lightning strikes sparked a number of bushfires that ultimately burnt 9,500ha, or 60 per cent, of Bunyip State Park. The fires were brought under control by April 2019 but Parks Victoria have kept sections of the park closed to ensure visitor safety, enable the park to recover and for rehabilitation works to take place. The four-wheel drive

community have been instrumental in contributing to these works, however there is evidence of four-wheel drivers ignoring the closures, causing further damage and prolonging the recovery process. This article seeks to explain why areas of Bunyip State Park remain off limits, the damage that can be done by ignoring closures and the incredible work volunteer groups, including Four Wheel Drive Victoria, have contributed.



Photos courtesy Parks Victoria

A place of rich biodiversity

From heathland swamps to towering Mountain Ash forests, Bunyip State Park is home to the Wellington Mint Bush, White-footed Dunnart and Lace Monitors. Keep an eye out for the Southern-emu Wren and Swamp Bush-pea, both rare sights. It is one of the few places in Victoria where our state floral emblem, the Common Heath, state fauna emblem, the Leadbeater Possum, and state avian emblem, the Helmeted Honeyeater, can all be found. These species will eventually return to the park after the fires with an unassuming looking plant, Button Grass, being one of the first observed to return. Button Grass provides valuable shelter for small animals that are particularly vulnerable to predation post bushfires. Eucalypt species are also making a slow return, with Banksia and Hakea species anticipated to sprout after the rains over winter.

In an exciting precedent, several orchid species have recently bloomed within the park – some of which have never been previously recorded within the area. Many of these orchids are listed under the Victorian Rare or Threatened Species register. Parks Victoria is mapping the locations of these threatened species via GPS to ensure future recovery works can be planned around their ongoing protection.

Steps to recovery

As well as these environmental values, the bushfires also had a huge impact on park infrastructure, particularly roads, bushwalking tracks, boardwalks and signage. Parks Victoria is working on a long term recovery plan which involves stabilising replacing damaged infrastructure, removing hazardous trees and pest control.

With heavy rains over winter and minimal vegetation to stabilise the ground cover, the park is suffering from extensive erosion and silt runoff. Parks Victoria has been installing coir logs, silt traps and hay bales which act as erosion control infrastructure to try and reduce the impact of this soil erosion on tracks, steep slopes and gullies around the park.

Parks Victoria staff and contractors have also been undertaking emergency stabilisation works, which includes removing trees that have been extensively damaged by fires to the point they present a safety risk. Repairing damaged roads and tracks (including drainage and erosion mitigation), restoring dozer lines constructed during fire fighting efforts,





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and conducting audits of all park assets impacted by the fires. Parks Victoria is also making efforts to control pest animals (foxes, cats, wild dogs) and pest plants.

A partnership approach

All of this work would not be possible without the tireless aid of local community groups over this winter. Bushwalking Victoria, Four Wheel Drive Victoria, the Victorian National Parks Association, Friends of Bunyip State Park, Friends of Kurth Kiln, Friends of Hoddles Creek and Equine Friends of the Forest have contributed more than 150 volunteer days during often seriously inhospitable conditions, including rain, hail, strong winds, thunder and very nearly snow!

Nonetheless, the variable conditions have not stopped volunteers from doing a huge amount of work in the park. Trailer loads of damaged wire and fencing have been removed, along with fallen trees and branches and other

remnants of the bushfires. They've also been installing cameras to record the presence of native animals – an activity that forms part of the Caught on Camera Project. Caught on Camera Projects are community based monitoring to assist with determining local fauna numbers in areas recovering from bushfires.

Four Wheel Drive Victoria have been invaluable in their assistance with coordinating activities between several affiliated clubs which resulted in a great uptake in volunteering. In addition to clearing out over two trailer loads of wire and fencing lines left exposed by the fires and other aforementioned activities, these groups have also helped remove several dumped cars and related refuse.

All the work by these volunteers is contributing to a speedier reopening of Bunyip State Park and have been an invaluable asset to recovery teams. It is very heartening to see so many in the local community are so passionate about the park, and the dedication and enthusiasm volunteers brought to their work was both inspiring and very much appreciated by Parks Victoria staff.

The road less travelled hindering efforts

It is disappointing volunteering efforts are being undermined by actions of those choosing to enter the park illegally. Parks Victoria Rangers have observed evidence of illegal off-road driving and motorbike riding which is damaging vegetation before it has the chance to regenerate and is causing erosion and silt runoff into streams. While this may seem like a relatively harmless activity. The park environment is still very raw and unstable with some areas being very slow to regenerate after the fires. Illegal visitor access results in stress to these already damaged environments, meaning it

takes longer for plants and animals to recover and return to the park.

The theft of eleven temporary gates used to block access to protect areas recovering has further delayed the park's rehabilitation.

Re-opened driving experiences that won't impact on recovery

Due to the efforts of Parks Victoria staff and volunteers, a number of tracks in Bunyip State Park have been recently opened for visitor access including:

- Western Track
- Gentle Annie Track
- Quartz Creek Road
- Bullock Link Track
- Rocky Track
- Robertson Creek Track

There is still a lot of work to be done before areas of the park are safe, sufficiently recovered and ready to be reopened, but there are thousands of kilometres of designated tracks available for riding and driving around Victoria.

More tracks are soon to be re-opened for four-wheel driving in Bunyip State Park, but some areas remain closed to ensure visitor safety, protect threatened plant and animal species, enable the park to recover and for rehabilitation works to take place. Respecting these closures will speed up the recovery process and enable the park to open sooner, once again providing opportunities to get away from it all and be immersed in nature. Parks Victoria asks that visitors respect where they're permitted to ride or drive and consider their impact on the environment.

Thanks to

David Clay
Parks Victoria for this informative article



Club Spotlight

Show time!



The Wanderin 4 Wheelers Club recently attended the Darche Show with the FWDV marquee and stand, making quite an impact





Three days of volunteer work in The Alpine National Park

Members of the Land Rover Owners Club of Gippsland spent three days, in mid-November, working at sites on Kelly Lane with Parks Victoria.

Kelly Lane, in the Alpine National Park north of Licola, runs off Tamboritha Road, following Shaw Creek, heading north and joining Howitt Road. Along the track there are several campsites and two historic huts; Kelly Hut and McMichaels Hut.

Our club volunteers first assisted Parks Victoria with a clean-up of the huts in November 2012. On that first occasion it was just three members working with Mike Dower from Parks Victoria. One of the features of our club is the long and close partnership we have with the Parks Victoria Foothills and Southern Alps Team.

This time, our small group of nine volunteers in six vehicles, met at the Heyfield DELWP/PV work centre on the morning of Monday the 18th. We were looking forward to the three days and the weather forecast was excellent for the work we had planned. Two trailers were to be towed by club members' vehicles. One of the trailers was the newly completed "volunteer trailer". It was great to see our club logo proudly displayed on the trailer along with other Parks Victoria volunteer partners for the Foothills and Southern Alps Team. The volunteer trailer carried fencing tools, hand tools, power tools, gloves, hi-vis vests, safety glasses and other bits and pieces we would need. The second trailer carried thirty long fence posts. A second load of fence posts would be collected on the Tuesday.

Our group travelled to Licola for the essential coffee stop. Wayne Foon,

Parks Victoria Acting Ranger Team Leader Heyfield, met us at Licola. Wayne's Parks 79 series Land Cruiser was towing a trailer with a Dingo digger and auger attachments. A welcome site for club members after years of digging holes for bollards, picnic table sets and fence posts with nothing more sophisticated than shovels and crow bars.

One of the problems for volunteers and Rangers working in the Alpine National Park is the time it takes to get materials and personnel on site. It was nearly midday before we entered the northern end of Kelly Lane, through the locked Seasonal Closure gate, off Howitt Road. The wooden bridge over Shaw Creek at Thomastown on the southern end of the track had been declared unsafe by an engineer. The bridge will be repaired over the next few months. On site at McMichaels Hut, after initial safety briefings and a quick lunch, unloading

the first load of fence posts began.

Our key tasks for the first day were to place bollards around the hut site and to repair some flashing on the hut itself. Over the three days our club members put in forty-eight bollards and fence posts, made repairs to the hut, removed some old wire fencing and cleared trees from Scrubby Creek Track. Wayne Foon instructed club members in the use of the Dingo digger, an added bonus to the trip.



It's always good to increase our skill set. Some of the more enthusiastic members of the club worked hard smashing their way through rock that the Dingo digger's auger refused to tackle.

The remote location brings some challenges. Careful planning ensures that everything we need is with us. It's a long way to Bunnings if you've forgotten the roofing nails. Medical help is a long way off too.

We have First Aid trained members on the trips. The club has its own defibrillator, snake bite kit, First Aid kits, etc. Two club members had satellite phones to augment the communication provided by the Parks trunk radio.

Often on our working events with Parks Victoria we camp out. This time we had the luxury of being able to stay at Surveyors Creek work camp. Hot showers went some way to soothing the tired muscles at the end of each day. We shared the night-time catering with Wayne Foon cooking a spaghetti banquet on Monday night and the club putting on an excellent bar-b-que on the Tuesday evening. We had so much food left; meat, salads, bread, pickles, sauce, etc. that Wednesday's lunch was a picnic of leftovers under the shade of the big peppercorn tree in Licola.

All tasks and clean-up were finished on Wednesday morning. On the way out the club members were able to unlock Scrubby Hill Track gate and do a check on Dingo Hill Track to clear any fallen trees. The Kelly Lane gate had been unlocked earlier in the day by Wayne.

We journeyed back to Heyfield to drop off the trailers. Once again, we had enjoyed the privilege of working with skilled Parks Victoria Rangers. We spent time in a magnificent part of the Alpine National Park. We solved the world's problems and told a few tall stories and jokes. Our volunteer hours will be added



to the thousands of hours logged by clubs affiliated with Four Wheel Drive Victoria. Importantly we had helped improve the visitor experience for all Park users.

Greg Rose.

Land Rover Owners Club of Gippsland Trip Leader.

FWDV Regional Representative Southern Alpine National Park.



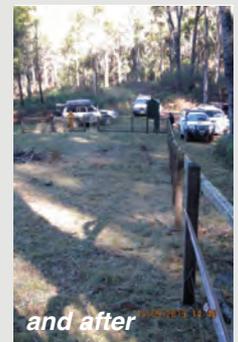
Club Spotlight

Under the leadership of Dulcie Watts, Toyota Land Cruiser Club of Victoria members recently held a working bee at the historic Jericho Cemetery, one of several historic sites which the Club maintains.

The cemetery was very overgrown, and some of the historic signs had been either stolen or damaged. Special bolts and nuts were installed that will hopefully prevent future theft. Slawko took charge of this job and Rebecca cleaned all the information boards working alongside him. Grass was mowed around the cemetery and old Oak tree.

Other historical sites up on the Woods Point-Walhalla Road were attended, plus adding extra historical sign posts were also completed.

TLCCV maintain Jericho Cemetery



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4X4 ACCESSORIES



Wayne Hevey and Alison McLaughlin recently attended a Mt Stirling Stakeholders Group meeting and at its conclusion joined Mt Buller Mt Stirling staff on a tour of the Mt Stirling summit.

Officially the winter season has finished on Mt Stirling. Unofficially, it still blows in during other seasons as well, as it did in late October.

We travelled via an MVO track / ski trail to Bluff Spur Memorial Hut, a refuge hut built in the 80's and used year round. The hut is in good shape and is well cared for these days by Resort management. Previously the hut was maintained for many years by the Pajero 4WD Club of Victoria and it was great to see the tin supply box inside still in use.

We left the vehicles at the hut and hiked uphill to the Howqua Gap track that leads up to the Summit to see progress works in readiness for access by summer travellers.

There were token patches of snow that had fallen a day or two beforehand. The air was dry and crisp, the sky blue with faint wisps of cloud and the bush was clean from being under its winter blanket. Stunning high country!

Works had commenced on some drainage and the grader was improving trackside pull out / parking space so traffic can have clear passage past parked cars near the walking trails to the Stirling tree and the Trig Point. Bollards were awaiting installation also along this short stretch, to protect vegetation and deter vehicles from driving off track. And, further on at the northern end, passed the saddle, the dozers had pushed through the mighty huge snowdrift that is always last to



Preparing for Summer on Stirling

Howqua Gap Track

leave the mountain, hence the longer seasonal closure.

The works we inspected, together with drafts of interpretive signage, are a part of a Tiered Action Plan to protect and save the Summit's sensitive environment. As part of the Stakeholder group, Four Wheel Drive Victoria was involved in the consultation process for the Plan. Hopefully the phase that the Plan is in now, of Tiers 1 and 2, will be all that is required to educate and encourage respectful visitation and awareness and, importantly for four wheel drivers, retain

vehicular access during the green season. Four Wheel Drive Victoria is committed to assisting resort management in whatever way we can, and planning is underway for a Camp Host style program.

Take a trip to the Summit of Mt Stirling this season. Stop at the saddle, walk up to the iconic Stirling Tree and the Trig Point. The views are fabulous. You won't be disappointed.

Alison McLaughlin



Summit sign



Bluff Spur Memorial hut

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“Throw in the latest safety upgrades and the Ranger undoubtedly has to be a serious contender for anyone seeking a lifestyle/working 4x4 utility”

Any way you look at it, the Ford Ranger is an impressive vehicle. Since launch in 2011 the Ranger has earned an enviable reputation in the ultra-competitive multi-tasking dual-cab utility market.

Our test vehicle was the volume selling XLT dual-cab, which sits in the Ranger hierarchy just below the sporty Wildtrak variant.

Ranger looks the part, with rugged styling suggestive of its truck-like origins in the States. Body lines are strong and confident with a new cleaner grille and chiselled lower bumper, and daylight running LED lights and HID headlights. Ford has introduced subtle styling changes across the line-up to differentiate the models. The XLT features bright chrome work and different bumper treatments.



On-road

Driving a quick 600kms to South Australia, you soon appreciate the improved suspension and on-road dynamics. It delivers car-like attributes to what many would regard as a working ute. Handling is a pleasure, steering well weighed and seating is supportive and comfortable. Ride quality is also first class, and far superior to the choppy ride I previously experienced on one of its main competitors. Alighting from any vehicle after a 3 hour stint behind the wheel, you soon pick up on any issues, and there were few with the XLT.

The Ranger uses rear leaf springs, and when pushed through corners body roll is limited, and power can be applied quickly. This model has upgraded suspension with improved geometry aimed to improve the driving experience fully laden and towing. Other benefits are reduced body roll as well as more precise steering.

Push a little too hard through a corner and the Ranger is composed and well sorted.



The 2019 Ranger retains the proven 147kw/470Nm 3.2-litre 5 cylinder turbo diesel engine that has been the mainstay of the model since launch. Recently Ford has introduced its new Bi-turbo 4-cylinder diesel that is mated to a 10-speed automatic transmission, with improved 157kw power and impressive 500Nm of torque. This option is available exclusively on the XLT and Wildtrak models.

Drivetrain

For our drive, the 3.2-litre TDCI engine was matched to a 6-speed manual transmission. Yes, there is still such a beast, and while the auto is a fine unit, having tested it on previous occasions, once you re-educate yourself to the driving requirements of a manual, this is a very good unit. In many instances first gear can be skipped, as it gets the wheels moving before jumping into 2nd and 3rd. There is generous leeway in the gears, meaning that the driver does not have to constantly reach for another gear as speeds vary.

Features

The Ranger delivers a quiet, refined cabin, with wind and road noise impressively suppressed.

The cabin is modern and well laid out with plenty of standard features, including 8-inch colour touch screen and reversing camera, standard Sat navigation, Apply Carplay, 2 USB ports, 2 12-volt plugs, dual climate control, rain-sensing windscreen wipers and attractive instrument lighting. Other standard fare includes Bluetooth with phone, digital radio, and wheel mounted controls.



Safety

Ford has raised the bar offering in 2019 year Ranger models with a suite of safety equipment. There are 6-airbags – front and side, full length curtain airbag, cruise control with adjustable speed limiter, DSC incorporating ABS, load adaptive control, roll-over mitigation, traction control and trailer sway control standard across all Ranger models. Additional new safety feature is AEB (autonomous emergency braking), with vehicle detection and pedestrian detection available. Also available on the XLT is a lane keeping aid, and lane departure warning, adaptive cruise control with forward collision warning and active park assist is available.

Doors open wide, with handy storage bins, while the rear seat is no after-thought, comfortably accommodating three adults. The rear seat folds up flush to reveal a flat floor, where in our case a Waeco fridge easily fitted.

The cargo area was fitted with Ford's tray liner and sports bar. The tailgate now has an easy-lift mechanism.

4x4 Driving

Having previously challenged the Ranger on the rough tracks of the northern Flinders ranges, this trip was along the variable beaches and coastal parks south from Robe SA. For many four wheel drivers sand driving can be particularly hazardous, and to tackle some of the softest beaches in Australia, along with adventurous dunes in a stock standard Ranger could be considered a folly! Not so in the Ranger. While correct tyre pressure and driver knowledge are a large part of the equation, the ability of the vehicle completes the package. The 5 cylinder engine responds quickly, with brisk acceleration, even having to move through manual gears. The Ranger's torque is impressive, and fully comes on tap at just 1500rpm. Despite moderate ground clearance for four wheeling, our Ranger was never stopped. It was happy in High range moving from 2nd and 3rd.

One large and steep dune did stop us on first approach, but with 3rd Low selected, the Ranger never felt like failing as the strong pulling power rocketed the vehicle up.

The 6-speed shifter is easy to use and 4x4, Low and High ranges are easily and quickly selected with a rotary dial. For four wheeling, traction control is also easily disengaged with the push of a button. A handy device for sand driving was the standard tyre pressure monitoring that kept us informed of current tyre pressures. There is also a locking rear diff.

Replace the dual purpose tyres with dedicated off road rubber, and maybe (but not essential) a small lift-kit and the Ranger would be virtually unstoppable off road.

Value.

At the time of writing Ford was offering an automatic XLT dual cab for below \$55,000, which for a mid-spec utility is great value. Ford are a little skimpy on only providing a driver's foot-mat, but the XLT – the largest selling model – offered a well appointed cabin, strong safety credentials, and plenty of features.

As a 4x4 it is among the best, with excellent gearing for High range or Low lugging four wheeling. The cargo area is generous and the 3500kg towing capacity is a bonus. Throw in the latest safety upgrades and the Ranger undoubtedly has to be a serious contender for anyone seeking a lifestyle/working 4x4 utility.

**Brian Tanner
Editor**



Trip Leader.

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Gayle & Graeme Mitchell, | Prado and T-Van |
| Anne and Ian Blainey | Ford Ranger |
| Betty and Alan Dash | Nissan Navara |

We travelled our separate ways with the intent to meet up at Ceduna on Saturday where we were to stay two nights giving us time to restock and have a look around. Gayle and I were staying at a caravan park and the others were in a motel.

Sunday morning we went shopping then we met up with the others and decided to go for a drive to Laura Bay south of Ceduna. This is an easy drive with some lovely views of the shoreline. On the way we came across three stumpy tail lizards, a sign the weather was warming up. At Laura Bay we saw an old rock tank that had been restored. It was located at the bottom of a hill and the water runoff was diverted into two stone gutters running around either side of the hill, and channelling the water into the tank.

Sunday night we were booked into the pub for a meal, very good value three courses for \$25 and a lovely place to watch the sun go down over the bay.

We arranged to meet at the bakery the next morning and then go and pick up the camp permits. This proved interesting.

I had phoned a few weeks prior to make enquiries and was told camping permits were \$5 per night, per person, and there would be no problem to just drop in and pick them up at the office in Ceduna. Arriving at 9:30am to pick up the permits, we were told they knew

Jackaroo 4WD Club GOOGS TRACK



The convoy

nothing about them and that the department had not been there for some time. On eventually arriving at the right office, we were told that all permit applications had to be made online. However, the gentleman behind the counter very kindly completed the applications online for us. Problem solved and we were on our way.

To get to the start of Googs Track, you drive north of Ceduna, turn off the highway and head to Lone Oak Homestead. In the past this is where you go to register you were travelling on the track, but that no longer applies.

At the start of Googs Track, we stopped and let our tyres down; for me 22lb in the Prado and 25lb in the van. Later that day I dropped down to 18lb all round.

Before we left we had a safety talk showing all how the Sat phone worked and where it was stored. Alan gave a demo on his E.P.I.R.B. The convoy order was Ian and Anne in the lead, Gayle and I in the middle and Betty and Alan would be tail end. The reason was seeing that I was towing there was someone front and back if I got stuck.

At the start of the sand dunes the base was damp and firm with some ruts and scalloped areas, but could be driven easily in high second and sometimes a quick change to first. For the first hour all was good, but as the sun dried the sand it was time to go to low range and pick up the speed when approaching the dunes. The faster speed gave a better ride.

On several of the dunes, I had to back off and have a second go, however near the Googs memorial site I got myself bogged near the top of a steep dune. Time for the first recovery. Out came the long handle shovel to clear away some sand, then we used Alan's

20 metre long recovery strap and attached it to Ian's car. In no time we were on our way again. Soon we arrived at the "Googs" memorial site where we had a look around and made our donations to the money tree. We then headed to the lake, which was to be our campsite for the next two nights.

At Googs Lake we set up camp at the main area which is on the western end of the lake, and this is the only area that has a toilet. Camp all set up we then went for a walk down to the lake. This lake is 15km long and 1km wide – quite an impressive sight, and there were a few small pools of water still remaining from recent rain. Back at camp we soon had a fire going and prepared for an early tea. No firewood can be collected in this area so it is BYO. Ian and Alan were keen to donate their wood so as to lighten the load. The spuds were cooked in the lovely coals.

Tuesday morning was a cool start but the sun was soon up and the temperature rose for another lovely day. Heading around the north side of the lake to visit Narala and Childara Rock holes, the track winds around the lake through various camp areas and there were several vantage points where you can see the lake.

There was no much wildlife to be seen, but just up the track we could see something in the middle of the road. Approaching slowly we found an emu chick. The chick was small and only a couple days old. It appeared to have hurt itself as it was crossing the track. It had dug itself a depression in the soft sand and as we got out to have a look, the chick became spooked and managed to move itself off the track and into the shelter of a tree. We hoped dad came back to look after the chick.

Next stop was Naraka Rock Hole. This rock hole is located a short drive south of the main track. The holes are in large areas of rock with various natural holes in which the rainwater runoff is collected. Some of these rock holes have been enlarged by the First Nations people. They light fires in the holes and the heat causes the rock to shatter. Over time this process is repeated and the water capacity is enlarged. One of the holes in this area is in the shape of a large bath with smooth edges. Alan showed us areas near these waterholes that were used as campsites. In these areas we found rock fragments that were not found in the area, and these rocks were used to make weapons and tools.

Next was Childara Rock Hole, a few kilometres down the track on private property. I had spoken to the Manager at Lake Everade Station and had permission to visit. The entrance to the property is located on the Dog Fence. As we were entering the property the local Dogger came along and wanted to know why we were on the Dog Fence track as it is restricted entry. We explained that we were going to the Childara Rock Hole and had received permission from the station Manager, all was good. We had a long talk to the Dogger who told us that a lot of travellers were using the dog fence track, which is illegal.



SatPhone Shop

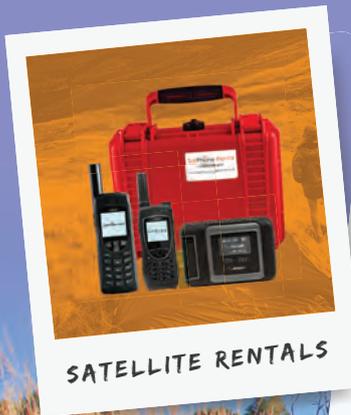
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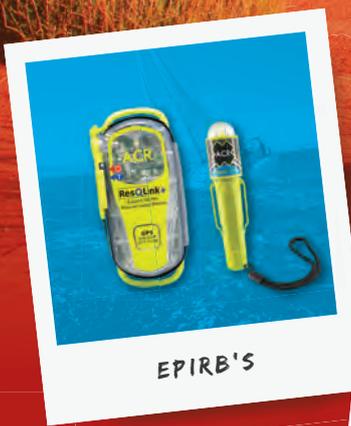


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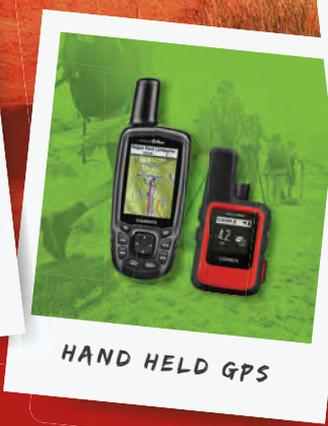


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He explained that most of the wild dogs are poisoned and camels do a lot of damage to the fence. He had shot 3 camels that morning.

Located a few kilometres through the gate, Childara Rock Hole is a very impressive site. It consists of a section of low lying granite rock which has had a low height rock wall built around it. This wall directs the water runoff into a larger rock-lined drain and then into a large stone tank. Any overflow goes into a dam. Returning to camp was uneventful except for the corrugations.

Wednesday we packed up and headed to Mt Finke for the night. Most of the sand hills were easy to drive with some bad ruts and large holes. A few kilometres before the Mt Finke turnoff the rain and wind started and was coming down at a 45 degree angle – not looking good. Reaching the campsite the rain was still coming down so Ian and Anne decided to take the safer option and continue on to Kingoonya for the night. They had already planned to leave and travel back to Adelaide the next day, so they had a head start.

We set up camp in the rain with the ground becoming muddy and the night looking like a very wet one. We were listening to Ian and Anne's progress over the radio, they seemed to be doing OK, but reception became weaker as they were getting out of range. They later sent a text message via the Sat phone saying they had made it to the rail line and advised that there were a few hard dunes ahead.

The rain clouds began to clear but the wind was still blowing. We decided to walk up Mt Finke and came across another campsite further up the track. Unfortunately we did not make it to the top as the drizzle started forcing us to head back to camp.

The weather was now clearing and the wind had dropped so we lit the fire. The ground was drying out and the night was looking better.

Thursday morning another cold start for the day, but as the sun rose so did the temperature for another lovely day. We headed out of camp past the second campsite and came to a third. We wish we had known this as this site was more protected from the wind. We continued on, crossing the salt pan and on to the last of the dunes. Our experience of the last few days made easy work of most of the sand hills that is until we came across a large, rutted, dry sand dune that Ian had warned us of, so it was Alan and Betty first and they managed to get over. Next it was me; low range 3 and a good run up, started losing momentum, a quick change to 2 low only 10 metres from the top still, going strong, hit the soft, dry sand near the



top and ground to a halt only a couple of metres from the top. *Recovery number 2.*

The sand was very soft, so we cleared the sand away from the wheels and placed a Maxtrax under each wheel and hooked up Alan's long recovery strap and I was soon out. There was no need to put Maxtraxs under the van wheels as they were sitting on top of the sand because the pressures were only 20 psi. There were still a few more sand hills to come so I wrapped the recovery gear around the nudge bar for easy access if required. The rest of the sand hills were no problem and we were soon over the Rail Line headed to Kingoonya. On our way we stopped at the Tarcoola Gold Mine for lunch and had a good look around. While we were there I found some railway spikes from the old gold mine rail siding. All the tracks and sleepers had been removed but the ballast was still there. We had a short stop at Tarcoola railway station now left to the elements, the only sign of life is a site camp for the mine operations.

At Kingoonya we set up camp in the campground behind the pub. This is a ripper place to stay, out of the wind and dust with lovely toilets and a shower block. Powered sites \$15/night, non-power \$10/night. After we set up we went to the pub for a drink and a chat. Later we went back to the pub for tea, which was very busy and we wondered where all the people came from.

Friday we headed north to Coober Pedy which was easy going with us arriving at lunchtime. We had plenty of time to restock and do some domestic chores before heading down the Oodnadatta Track the next day.

Saturday we headed off to William Creek and headed to the pub to have a look around and a drink at the bar. The pub has changed since we were there last, a little bit more upmarket. The dining area was busy with guests from a tour bus and other travellers. We elected to have lunch outside under the trees and watch the world go by. We

headed back down the Oodnadatta Track to Warrina Creek. We parked off the track near the bridge and went for a closer look at the old bridge where there were only a few sleepers remaining in the middle of the bridge.

Time to head off to our campsite. One small problem, Alan was bogged in the very soft sand and could not get out. I backed my car and van around to snatch him out, but no go, I too got bogged.

Dual recovery was planned. Alan started clearing sand away so he could use two sets of Maxtraxs, and I unhooked the van, let the tyres down and moved my car around ready to snatch Alan out if needed. Fortunately he was able to drive out. Next my turn. I cleared sand away and filled holes then placed two sets of Maxtraxs where my wheels were to go and backed up and hooked up the van. I then placed the third set of Maxtrax between the front and rear wheels and drove out. Finally on our way, but our dramas were not over yet. About a kilometre down the track my back window shattered. We travelled a short way down the track and decided to stop at Beresford Siding for the night. With camp set up it was time to temporarily repair the window. For many years I have been carrying a roll of so-called "super tape" with me. Time to put it to the test.

I applied it to both the outside and inside of the window and it managed to hold together until I got back home. Must find another roll before the next trip.

Sunday we headed off to Maree for lunch then on to Farina to camp the night.

We arrived early afternoon and had time to have a good look around. This is one of my favourite campgrounds with hot showers and good toilets and is quiet in the off season.

Monday we headed off to Peterborough stopping at Hawker for morning tea and a walk around. At Peterborough we went to the Sound and Light show, which is highly recommended.

Tuesday Alan and Betty had selected that night's campsite – Paruna – located north of Pinnaroo. This is another excellent site with good showers and toilets and very quiet.

Wednesday we headed off to Pinnaroo for morning tea at the bakery then time to say goodbye to Alan and Betty. They were heading south to check out the sites for Alan's wildflower trip and we were heading east to Swan Hill, Echuca and then home.

Graeme Mitchell.
Trip Leader, Jackaroo 4WD Club



The real risks when going camping?

So, the colder months are finally behind us and summer is back on the horizon.

It is at last, time to load up the 4WD and head out to the bush for more than a day at a time and we can enjoy the great Australian pastime of ... camping!

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 camper trailers and off road 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 are so many options you now have to consider when you head out camping; 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" and

"will I have access to my Insta", "how many chairs do we need" and of course ... "can I bring my hair dryer" ? ... 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.

With my family, however, preplanning has become the key to success ...

Previously, even though the trip route had been well rehearsed, drive times allowing for the occasional scenic stop (a requirement the grand children somehow introduced) and most importantly of all, the

notes from our previous trip debrief of what I did not bring or allow to be brought on the previous trip, had made up the majority of our pre-trip discussions.

Now, all this is in the past.

Insurance comes in many forms. I have done my risk assessment and listened to those that must be listened to the most, and prioritised accordingly. Last year I gave my wife exactly what she wanted for Christmas, a camping toilet, it is now the first thing packed, at last we can travel anywhere at any time!

Happy wife, happy life! (... and yes, it is my job to empty it ...)



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