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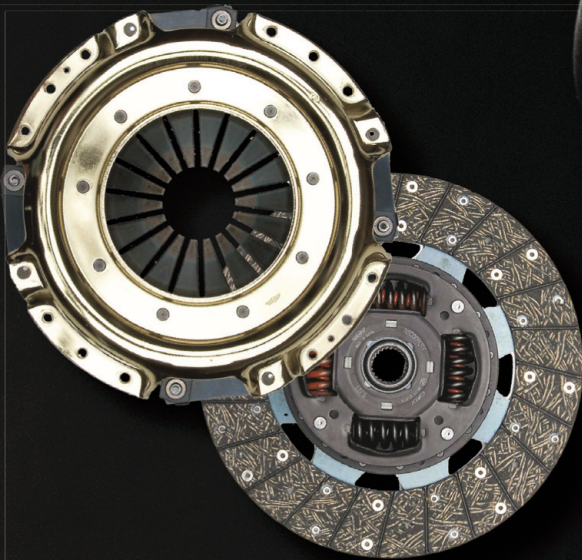
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# From the President



Another year has passed by and what a year it has been around the world with wars, global warming and electric cars being the focus of many discussions around the campfires.

I am extremely proud to have served with our Board members this year and of course our fabulous office team with Wayne Hevey, Alison McLaughlin, Daniel Whitby, and Di Hodgson. One can only feel blessed to be a member of the Board with such a professional group in our office.

Our Association has had a good, yet challenging year. The biggest challenges have come from outside our Association – they being fire, rain and floods in some parts of our state, followed by COVID19 raising its ugly head again. These have impacted on some internal aspects of our Association and noticeably on what we do using our four-wheel drives.

In spite of these external factors, our Association is in really good shape. The financial position

is showing positive trends into the future. Income from training, which was expected to slow, but is increasing and together with a successful grant application once again will help the budget move towards being balanced. Club affiliation fees are steadily arriving, our government funding is not so secure, however, we are trending towards a good year ahead. The Board has focused on providing service to our members through judicious financial management and cost-efficient operation provided by our CEO. We are very thankful for the astute efforts of our CEO to keep costs under tight control to maximise income generating activities. The Board are satisfied with the feedback from the Presidents meetings regarding our efforts to find a permanent home for FWDV and as such are moving forward with some serious reviews of Value for Money properties available in the marketplace.

For FWDV this year it has been an exceptional one in my opinion, the

Association continues to enjoy an exceptional relationship with our partners in DELWP and Parks Victoria and continue to meet regularly.

Moving forward from a political sense, this year we have developed an enduring relationship with our first nation's people from the Taungurung Land & Waters Council and the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation as another string in the bow to ensuring our tracks stay open. Both these groups have a direct connection with the high country and its environs and will have an influence on how it is to be managed in the future. Gordon Porter is working with the Yorta Yorta Traditional Owner Land Management Board in the Shepparton district which will no doubt augur well for our relationships with the Indigenous people across the board.

This last year we have achieved the granting of the old quarry near Toolangi to develop into our very own training ground. This will allow the RTO to expand without any encumbrance to land ownership. The Board has appointed Micah Spedding to head up the RTO compliance and management of our ability to make this venture very profitable.

President's meetings were kicked off and have been successful along with the Regional Reps meetings (albeit the latest RR meeting was cancelled due to weather constraints) we are moving forward with the communication to the clubs through these forums and will continue with them in 2023.

I wish you all the best for the coming Christmas Holiday Season and the summer season which will hopefully have some sun. We trust you will maintain the shiny side up and follow our Tread Lightly motto whilst travelling in some of our most difficult areas.

Merry Christmas to you all.

**Eric Bishop**  
**President**

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Another Annual General meeting has been conducted with a very good number

of participants coming along to make the night worthwhile, some 51 in attendance with another dozen tuning in via the Zoom facility we had set up. Many thanks to Rob Leversha for his expertise in making this achievable and to the LROCV for the use of their meeting Owl device, which enabled those people to view and hear the event.

As was stated at the meeting, we didn't receive the funding we have been used to getting for this year, but are looking forward to seeing what the upcoming election brings forth and we will once again attempt to put our case forward to the sitting Minister for the coming years.

On the bright side, we were able to still forge ahead because we were still able to keep our training courses running at a constant rate, which kept our balance sheet in a healthy state. Although insurance premiums have risen across the board from between 20 and 30% in the past year due to the recent fires and then Covid19, we have been able to keep our fees at the same level as previous years by virtue of rejoining with the National Council. This increased the numbers for the new policies which allowed this to occur and pushed our death cover back to \$100k rather than the previous \$50k. Other factors which brought about the rejoining was the ownership of our logo and the fact that there would not be any persons still on the committee from the former group which allowed the funds to disappear.

We are seriously looking to purchase our own building to own and occupy which will secure our tenure for the future and give us somewhere to call home. This building will not only house our offices but will allow us to use as a training facility with regards to theory classes and other activities, which we hope will also benefit potential sponsors and supporters. We envisage this to be also utilised by our clubs for meetings and the like on a very regular basis, acknowledging that it is owned by all member clubs of the Association. We are looking to keep the proximity of these premises close to a main arterial access for the sake of all, if possible. Be assured you will be kept up to date as things progress into the near future.

Our Association club numbers have fallen away slightly since 2019 but we have seen some gradual growth from other sources recently, now running at 78 member clubs. We realise that things are getting dearer and the impact it has on whether people can afford to spend money on their recreational pursuits, but the upside is getting out and about amongst like-minded friends in things you enjoy doing, does have a huge impact on your well-being and positivity towards life. We all need to help each other understand the reason why we join these clubs, for the camaraderie and fun that is derived from being together and involved not for political or personal aspirations.

The income generated from the RTO has improved since last year and is showing no signs of abating due to the professionalism shown by all in making this come about. This financial year to date with driver training, we have trained 81 people in public proficiency courses, 71 in corporate proficiency courses, totaling 152 people in proficiency courses, with 25 people in public accredited courses and 149 in corporate accredited courses, 174 in total. We have also trained 54 people in chainsaw training, plus subsidised 28 people in first aid training.

We can be very proud of the way we conduct ourselves in all aspects of this area from the initial contact with our prospective clients to the dedication and delivery of the training itself. We gained re-registration with ASQA thankfully this year, but unfortunately lost Sheila Douglas shortly afterwards as our Compliance Manager due to family commitments and other volunteer activities she is involved with. We thank her enormously for her assistance over the three years she was with us, her efforts were invaluable to say the least. Moving forward, Micah Spedding is now our RTO Compliance Manager, and he comes to us with a wealth of knowledge and experience in the compliance and training areas. He currently is employed full time as the Lifesaving Victoria Training Manager and was previously the Western Region Manager for the SES Victoria.

Gates have been made and have been installed at the Toolangi quarry site after meetings had been held with the Taungurung clan and DELWP managers regarding the plans to

develop the area. We envisage that we will start work on the development of the facility in the very near future in conjunction with those two authorities, who have given their blessing and willingness to see it go ahead.

We are still working with the Gunaikurnai Indigenous employees of GLaWAC, in Kalimna East Gippsland and have also done training with the Taungurung clan out of Alexandra, which all goes well with the push from our end to gain alliance and understanding with the first nation clans. Board member Gordon Porter and I had a meeting recently with Parks Victoria's Director Managing Land Country Together, which is the first step in engaging these groups from an already established body. We firmly believe we need to be in on the ground floor with the First Nation people to hopefully cement our relationship and our ongoing ability to be able to traverse the landscape without restriction due to an understanding of respect and concern for the land and its cultural meaning.

The Office of the Conservation Regulator (OCR) held a seminar recently involving all user groups in both face to face and digital formats. We were the only keynote speaker on both these occasions, and it gave us a chance to express to the other groups who we are and what we represent in terms of how we function as an Association and why we have the respect of the Minister's office and government Land Managers. We will pursue further discussion with all other groups to try and establish common threads to help keep our pastimes viable and available to all interested parties.

We are fortunate enough to have a very strong Board at present with all members having incredibly strong business backgrounds and experience, enabling us to conduct our affairs at a most professional level. This certainly brings great confidence to our future dealings and aspirations.

Once again, I can't thank enough the staff in our office and applaud them for the excellent job they do for the Association and myself. Everyone works together beautifully; we just get things done seamlessly with the least amount of angst or bother. It makes it a pleasure to come to work.

**Wayne Hevey**  
**Chief Executive Officer**



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# Learning About Aboriginal Culture As You Travel

*Kimberley paintings.*

Prior to European settlement in Australia, there were an estimated 750,000 Aboriginal inhabitants in possibly as many as 400 nations. The culture of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is the oldest on earth, the current research suggests well over 65,000 years. Most of the pre settlement population was in the temperate regions of the continent that are the

most developed areas for cities and agriculture now. With abundant food sources, very sophisticated non nomadic societies developed in those areas. An excellent example of the complexity of the societies is the Gunditjmara people and the Budj Bim landscape in southwestern Victoria. Complex aquaculture systems ensured that the Gunditjmara had a constant

reliable food source and an abundance of highly sought-after trade items. The reliability of food allowed the building of stone based houses in small family settlements. The people who lived in the arid lands, developed hunter gatherer techniques and trading routes that enabled survival in the very challenging environment. I would highly recommend that travellers have a copy of the Aboriginal Australia map. Produced by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the map shows the major language or tribal group areas.

As four-wheel drive travellers there are many ways we can learn about and even experience traditional Aboriginal culture. Remember that all the land we travel through was or still is Aboriginal land. Much of the land is under native title. If you travel extensively in outback Australia, you would be used to applying for permits to transit Aboriginal land. Land in Australia falls into several ownership categories; freehold, pastoral leases, crown leases, public land, native title and land in Aboriginal trust. Approximately 40% of Australia is



*Sampling bush tucker on cultural tour day trip from Batton Hill at the northern end of the Hay River Track.*



covered by either exclusive or shared native title. Many of our National Parks are run under joint management models.

Indigenous communities have freehold title over about 17% of Australia. Permits give the traveller permission to transit and stop for fuel and supplies, at land owned by Indigenous communities. In most cases the permit holder is allowed to camp, at a specified distance from the road or track, while in transit. The permits are usually free and often as simple to apply for as filling in an online form with an instant response. Some, however,

can take several days, to be approved. It is important to be respectful in communities and follow the conditions of the permit. Remember that these are very remote settlements and that transport costs are high. Expect fuel and supplies prices to be high as a result of the isolation. This year at Kunawarritji community, near well 33 on the Canning Stock Route, we were able to have a fascinating conversation with one of the residents about the spirit dog that protects their ancestral lands.

We have been fortunate to visit several Aboriginal Cultural Centres and do some cultural tours. Within Victoria

there are some excellent cultural centres, for example the beautifully designed, Brambuk Cultural Centre in Halls Gap. In Central Australia there are many opportunities to learn about indigenous culture. There are cultural tours at Standley Chasm, a Culture Walk at the Alice Springs Desert Park, the Araluen Cultural Precinct and many opportunities to learn about culture at Uluru.

Local knowledge can be very useful. Several years ago, we were on a remote track in the Kimberley region and some locals suggested a better route than the one we had intended to



*Painting in small cave in Central Australia.*

*Photos by Lois and Greg Rose*



take, that saved us considerable time and avoided a possible vehicle damaging river crossing. At Punmu community this year we were told, by a local, about an excellent campsite that was sheltered and well off the road.

It is worth doing some online research before a trip to find Aboriginal cultural sites, centres and tours, along your intended route. Many National Parks have places of Aboriginal significance that can be visited. These are well worth the effort it sometimes takes to reach them. Galleries of rock art, either petroglyphs (carving into rock) or paintings are often features of Parks,



*Sign indicating just how remote the community is*

*Below: Sign that welcomes travellers on the Gary Junction Road and Canning Stock Route, to Martu Country.*



there are many in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. The spectacular and intriguing Wandjina ochre paintings in the Kimberley region were a highlight of one trip.

As a traveller there are some other ways to support Aboriginal heritage, culture and communities. If you are buying souvenirs, like t-shirts, or art-

work with Aboriginal designs, look for an indication that the artist of the design is Aboriginal and credited with the design. In communities it is often possible to buy original artwork from the art co-operative. This is not a bartering situation but an opportunity to own something truly unique.

Several years ago, we were travelling in the Gippsland hills with some visitors from London. We had stopped at a couple of old sawmill sites, a pile of stones where an early settler's hut had been and a wooden bridge. The visitors were rather unimpressed that Australia only had a history a couple of hundred years old. It was fun explaining that Australian history was much older than they could possibly imagine.

**By Greg Rose**  
**Land Rover Owners Club of Victoria**  
**Land Rover Owners Club of Gippsland**



*The fuel shed at Kunawarritji community.*





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# From the FWDV Archive – Trackwatch Summer 2002

## Mt Stirling 2002!

On Thursday 25th October, the Mt Stirling Alpine Resort Management Board issued a press release advising the tracks across Mt Stirling would not be reopened at the normal date, 1st November 2002.

Whilst the press release did promise to work closely with 4WD groups 'to explore future options to rehabilitate these tracks to an appropriate standard for future use' no commitment was given to the when, and if, the tracks would ever reopen. Access to Craigs Hut, Bindaree Falls and Pineapple Flat are not affected, these fall outside the area controlled by the Board. The summit is still accessible 'walk along the various walking trails through the Alpine ash and the snow gum forests to the summit area. The most popular walks take approximately 3 hours return'.

Four Wheel Drive Victoria President Michael Martin had already written to the Minister on the 9th September and following the Board's press release a further letter was sent, deploring the decision and saying, "I would ask that you give this matter your immediate attention and instruct the Mt Stirling Alpine Resort Management Board to rescind the decision and enter into meaningful discussions regarding the use and maintenance of the tracks."

A meeting was then called for clubs to discuss the Mt Stirling situation on the following Wednesday and it is very gratifying to report that despite just two day's notice being given, 18 clubs and close on 40 members were able to attend.

Just as the meeting was starting, a phone call was received from the Minister's advisor. We were told that the Minister was making money available for the repairs to be carried out. When questioned, the advisor confirmed that all tracks will be reopened on the 1st November. The Minister's press release and subsequent letter dated 20th October backed up these promises and, at the time of writing in late November, the work has still to be completed and the tracks reopened.

## Mount Stirling - 2002!



Craigs Hut, Clear Hills, Mt. Stirling, cloudy tracks..

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The Board issued an Information Paper in early October putting forward their views and the 'facts' as they saw it. This is summarised opposite with comments added from our own and other representatives on the Mt Stirling Alpine Advisory Group. The complete five-page document is available from the website.

One outcome from the meeting on the 2nd October was that a petition would be prepared calling for the disbandment of the Mt Stirling Alpine Resort Management Board because of our great concern with the performance and history of the board. We are asking that the Government give attention to the continued existence of the board as they are not able to fulfil their duties to provide 'sustained environmental management or the promotion of tourism within one of Victoria's greatest natural assets.'

We are grateful to **Finer Finish Printing** who kindly printed and bound the petition forms at no charge. These were delivered to the National 4x4 show on the Thursday afternoon.

Our plans to present the completed petition to Parliament have been put on hold with the calling of the state election on the 30th November.

The Board have claimed that extensive work needs to be done on the tracks and a figure of several hundred thousand dollars has been mentioned with the work unlikely to be completed before Easter 2003. However, it is our under-

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The Board has claimed that extensive work needs to be done on tracks and a figure of several hundred thousand dollars has been mentioned with the work unlikely to be completed before Easter 2003. However, it is our understanding that the amount of work is much less, and it can be completed in a few days. Reports have been received that work is being carried out in late November.

## Information Paper on the 4 WD Track across the

### What the Mt Stirling Board Claims...

The closure of the 4 WD Track across the Summit Environmental Effects Statement in May 1996.

The Mt Stirling Alpine Resort Management Board (nity and stakeholders since the 21st February 2000)

The Mt Stirling Alpine Resort Management Board I Monument Saddle trail both have very unsafe section mit 4 WD Track. To keep them open creates a very become dead end trails as there are no car parks or traffic difficulties with the summit 4WD Track closure and create substantial environmental disturbance. If Saddle trail remain open then all traffic would have trail, a risky and problematic situation.

A soil conservationist from DNRE has provided ex 28th July 2002 recommending closure pending rehi

The Mt Stirling Alpine Resort Management Board Gap Hut Trail, the 4 WD track across the Summit riorating each year, have become a significant safety drive, beyond the skills of all but very well experie

Certain sections on these trails have been the subje regular basis as " particularly hazardous to both dri are of the opinion that they would not be fulfilling selves and the government vulnerable to a high lev tracks open to summer 4 WD visitation without co

The 4 WD track across the face of the summit attr months. These vehicles have caused massive erosio fragile alpine environment. True alpine treeless hig Australian landmass. This rare alpine environment granitic structure, is prone to erosion and difficult mountain have lost over one metre of topsoil, and alpine bogs and local streams. The continual vehic seven days per week, is also causing the track to w which in turn exacerbates the problems.

Bush walkers, horse and camel riders continue to l as will Cross Country skiers in winter.

Craig's Hut is the major draw card for visitors to I north east alpine region (approximately 100,000 v closures have no effect on this visitation. A relativi ficult terrain leading to the Summit. Visitors will :





# Amarok Club of Victoria Mallee wandering...

September 29 - October 2, 2022



***The Amarok Club of Victoria have been running trips through the Mallee since 2013.*** This area in Victoria's northwest provides some of the most enjoyable and challenging sand driving in the state and comprises Little Desert National Park, Big Desert Wilderness Area as well as Wyperfeld National Park, and Murray-Sunset National Park, two of the three largest parks in Victoria. This time of year, visitors are treated to a spectacular array of wildflowers, unique desert landscapes, abundant wildlife you mightn't expect to see in such a desert region and a magnificent view of the night time sky without the light pollution common throughout the rest of the state. It's no

wonder we keep coming back.

With a ruptured ACL, I took my time getting to Nhill with frequent stops to straighten my leg but got there a bit after two. After topping up the tank and grabbing some lunch from a local café, I headed north through Yanac on to Murrayville-Nhill Rd for half an hour and stopped at Broken Bucket Campsite at around 3.30pm.

The campsite is in the Broken Bucket Tank Bushland Reserve (-35.967758, 141.399293) which is probably not as widely publicised as campgrounds like Big Billy Bore, Snowdrift, Red Bluff, Wonga or Stockman's but still has plenty of room, a drop toilet, bore water, picnic tables



and is accessible to vans and campers in all weather. With plenty of fire pits to choose from, I selected one close to the windmill water pump and was set up with a fire going before Trish and Allan arrived in their van.





Nibbles and wine were out by the time Sean arrived with his family. Dale arrived shortly after, down from Mildura and we all cooked dinner and settled in for an evening around the campfire. Andrew arrived from South

Australia after some technical issues delayed him till a little after dark, just in time for some camp oven corn bread. It was a change to be able to sit around the fire without having to dodge rain showers or reach for the thick jacket to stay warm after a lengthy, frigid, wet season in Victoria. With a couple of days of sand driving ahead of us, we were all pretty conservative and hit our respective sacks at a very respectable hour.

Friday morning was heralded in with the obligatory bacon, eggs and billy tea, or coffee, to some near perfect weather. Everybody was bright-eyed and bushy-tailed and ready for a day in the dunes. After breakfast, a

morning briefing outlined an ambitious plan of aiming for Snowdrift Campground before returning to camp, with some contingency plans if the going proved too arduous to make the distance. Personal detail forms were collected, and everybody mounted up, assumed the designated convoy positions and radio checked in before rolling out of camp shortly after 9.00am.

We started driving east on Netting Fence Track, four kilometres south of camp along Murrayville Track. After a short distance, we stopped to air down for comfort more than traction. This track proved to be slower than expected with bog holes and





northeast onto Pella Track, a short time later stopping at the intersection with Milmed Rock Track. It was clear that, while the sand was nicely compacted after all the recent wet weather, the undulations, coupled with our desire to keep the contents of our vehicles in one piece, meant we were not going to cover anything close to the distance we hoped for, and so we had a brief powwow and decided to jettison 'Plan A' in favour of taking a shorter route back to camp. We turned northwest onto Milmed Rock Track and drove to Lookout Dune for lunch. Much to our horror, the actual lookout was a 500m

undulations to keep the speed down. A short patch of cell reception had me updating our Ground Charlie on hands-free which, it turned out, was sufficient distraction for me to pick the wrong line through one of many bog holes. This provided an opportunity to drag out the winch cable for, what turned out to be, a self-recovery and photo opportunity.

After averaging about twenty kilometres per hour on Netting Fence Track for about thirty kilometres, we turned north onto Chinaman Well track. Another twenty-three kilometres of similarly slow going and we turned





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walk away up a soft sand dune which we collectively decided was not worth the time and sweat. Subsequently, we all had a bite at the base of the dune before pushing on.

We drove through Round Swamp Camp and on to Milmed Rock which turned out to be the size of a Mini Minor. Maybe notable for Wyperfeld, but not much chop as a landmark. We slowed but didn't stop for a closer look. Another thirty kilometres of soft sand dunes got us back onto Murrayville Track. After most of the day averaging twenty kilometres an hour, Murrayville Track was a god-send. The eighty kilometre per hour speeds we achieved felt like flying. The remaining forty-five kilometres south on Murrayville was covered in no time and we pulled back into camp a little after 4.30pm.

Not long after arriving back at camp, we were joined by Dean and his son, who couldn't get there for the Thursday, and then Russell who was also delayed due to mechanical issues. This completed our seven vehicle convoy for our Border Track drive in the morning. Dinner was cooked, mostly around or on the campfire, as we shared yarns and a few drinks and marveled at a sky chock-a-block with stars.

In the morning, we were all amazed by even better weather. After a long run of dodgy weather for club trips, it was hard to believe we had lucked a series of beautiful days for our trip. A similar briefing and set up got us rolling shortly after 9.00am again.



Knowing the condition of at least the southern half of Murrayville Track, it was an easy decision to use this route to get up to Murrayville and the west over the border to Pinnaroo for some to top up fuel tanks. Sections of Murrayville Track were chopped up pretty badly by vehicles driving through when too wet. One of these sections was still very boggy with some sizable ruts that would swallow a small car.

Dean being only the third car through, chose a line which saw his Rok sitting on its belly with all four tyres spinning. It was the ideal opportunity for a snatch recovery which was performed as per the text

book before all other vehicles drove through on a different line.

We pulled into Pinnaroo a little later than expected but stocked up on fuel and some other essentials before back-tracking about seven minutes to the Border Track.





A smooth track gets you about twenty kilometres south to the start of the park before the track turns a bit softer and one way.

Regulations had changed since we were last here in 2017 and a sign on the edge of cell reception alerts visitors to the need to acquire a permit to enter Ngarkat Conservation Park, through which The Border Track runs. Luckily, Dean had given us the heads-up and members had all acquired the obligatory permit online prior to now so there was no need to stop at the sign and wait for permits to be acquired before venturing beyond cell range.

Just before hitting the one way section through the gate which needs to be opened and closed behind you, we aired right down and made sure all cargo was well secured.

We hadn't travelled along the track far before we caught a couple of groups. The front group had got themselves stuck on a relatively gentle incline. Shovels and maxtrax got them through although we suspect greater tyre deflation may have been more useful. They claimed to have lowered to 25psi but we could see negligible bagging of their tyres. They did try and restore the track after getting clear which was good to see but it wasn't really necessary as the group in front of us as well as our group putted over with losing traction.



A little further down the track, Russell did find a dune that was more challenging. With the Amarok's reluctance to reverse in sand, a recovery become necessary whereas, if it had been possible to reverse back down the dune, a second attempt with more momentum would likely have got him up and over. This was our third type of recovery which rounded off nicely the variety of experience attained by our members on this trip.

For lunch, we were keen to stop, eat



and resume our southern trek before the young group that had previously delayed us caught us up. Luckily, we saw not hide nor hair of them for the rest of the day.

We continued down the Border Track without further hiccup. Given how wet it had been prior to our weekend, the sand was fairly well packed and driving over the dunes was just a case of chugging slowly over without losing traction.

We turned east on Red Bluff Track, just before the Red Bluff turnoff. After a few kilometres of plodding over undulations we decided to leave Red Bluff Track and turned south onto Chappell Road.

The first ten kilometres of this track was a wonderful little drive along a relatively flat sandy track with visibility for ever in all directions, so the pace ramped up quickly. Further down Chappell Road, the surface changed to a dirt road and then onto a brand-new patch of bitumen which was as smooth as a runway.

After a couple of days of dunes and





undulations, this was glorious to drive upon. After only a few kilometres, we turned east onto Sanders Rd, another relatively smooth sand track, albeit seldom used by the look of it. This took us back to Murrayville Track where we had turned off to Netting Fence Track the day before. Another four kilometres north brought us back again to camp.

Sunday morning weather was better again. With no drive scheduled for the day, other than our trips home, we had a bit of a sleep in and a much more leisurely morning. Some of us were even treated to some delicious pancakes compliments of Chef Taj.



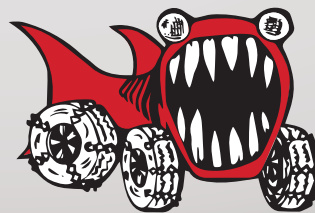
For the most part, this trip is rated 'Medium'. While there are opportunities to test your sand driving skills, most are accompanied by chicken trails and opportunity to opt out when these challenges are presented. Sand driving is very weather dependent but in the opposite way to mud. Loose sand can be challenging when dry but a piece of cake after a spot of rain. For us there was certainly spots in which one could, and did, get held up but not due to soft dry sand as is normally the case. Instead, it was bog holes on clay-pan tracks, chopped up by vehicles before us that generally slowed us down. Each recovery was minor with minimal delay due to drivers deciding early that a recovery was a better option than potentially doing further damage to the track and vehicle by trying to muscle our way out of the hole in which we found ourselves.

Thanks go to Allan and Trish Clark for organizing this trip as well as the Amarak Club of Victoria members who attended, making it my favourite trip for the year.





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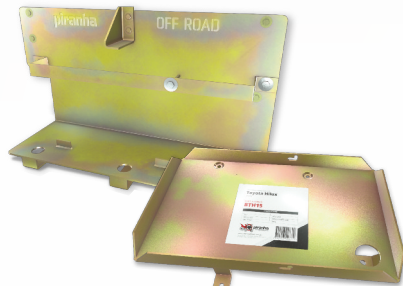
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## True Grit 4x4 Club

# Cape York Adventure

*Two years ago my husband Daniel said: "for my 40th birthday I'm going to be standing at the tip of Australia," (Cape York). From then on we started slowly planning the places we would visit...*

Two years ago my husband Daniel said: "for my 40th birthday I'm going to be standing at the tip of Australia," (Cape York). From then on we started slowly planning the places we would visit, gradually upgrading things on the car and organising spare parts etc. We put it out to our local 4x4 club, True Grit, and we had another four vehicles that were going to come along for the adventure. The plan was that we would all make our own way up and meet in Cairns.

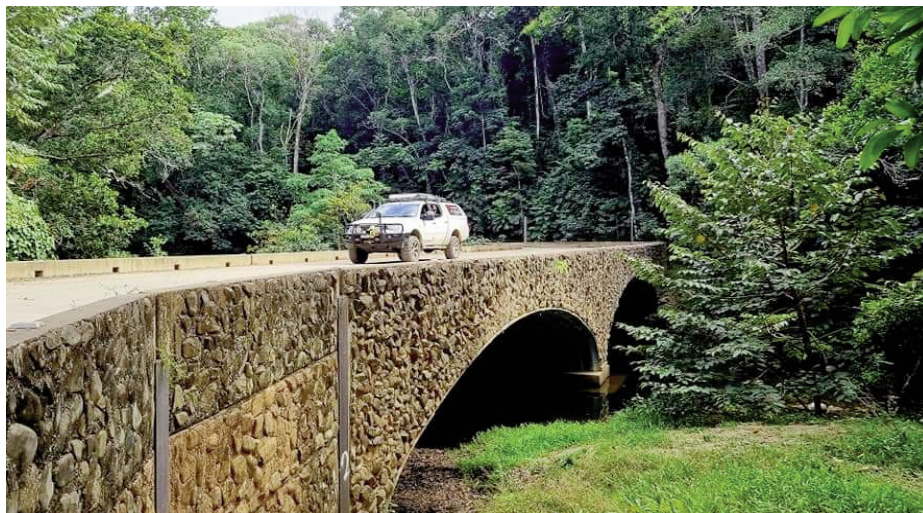
We had just passed Roma, Queensland when the car went into limp mode. Daniel has a scan tool, so plugged it in to have a look and it said something about the ECU and Transmission, but they were very

generic codes. We cleared the codes and kept going, stopping at a mechanic/auto electrician in Emerald just to get a quick once over. They gave us the all clear and could see some old codes on there, thought it may have had something to do with the battery but should be OK. We continued driving but between Emerald and Townsville it went into limp mode another three times, every time when we were going uphill. We were towing a three tonne trailer and had a few things hooked up to the battery and everyone we spoke to was saying it was the alternator. We arranged an auto electric/mechanic in Cairns, unplugged pretty much everything other than the essentials and

kept going. It was thrown into limp mode again! We were still 150kms from Cairns. We knew the mechanic needed to see the codes to accurately diagnose the issue but it was a Friday and there would be no way we would make it there before they shut for the weekend if it was in limp mode, so we cleared the codes again and kept going. When we finally made it to the mechanic they spent a good hour and a half having what was supposed to be a 'quick look'. They did a couple of tests and couldn't find anything obvious so booked the car in to have a better look. We were going to have a few days in Cairns before meeting the rest of the gang and heading to the Cape anyway.

While we enjoyed a few days visiting the reef and Kuranda, the day before we were to start heading north the auto electrician said he had found a dodgy wire, so hopefully that would be the end of our car issues. That night we met up with our friends and the next morning we excitedly headed off towards Laura. Unfortunately at around Marreba we were having car issues again!

We kept going and made it to just before Laura when we pulled the pin and decided we needed to head back to Cairns as we had gone back into limp mode several times.





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The rest of our group carried on and we hoped that eventually when we had the car sorted we would meet up with them. We limped back to Mt Carbine and called RACQ to organise a tow truck back to Cairns. We hadn't cleared the codes so they could see them this time. Back into the mechanic went the car. Over the next three weeks it went in and out of the mechanic four times. They would find something they thought 'could' be the issue, we would pick it up, pack up the camper trailer, take it for a spin, and it would be thrown into limp mode again. It was only happening while towing and going uphill.

Daniel especially was so disappointed as his 40th birthday rolled around and we knew we weren't going to make it to the tip. However our friends still went to the tip that day as we had planned. A random stranger near the tip sign was having lamingtons with her kids and overheard our friends saying they had a candle but forgot a cake. This lady then offered one of her lamingtons for them to use as cake! Our group sang happy birthday at the tip and got photos to send to us.

The fourth time we took the car to a different auto electrician as we couldn't get in to the one we had originally used. They were not able to diagnose it but suggested it could be the solenoid for the turbo booster. It may just need a clean out as the pin could be getting stuck, or it could need a whole new one which would need to be ordered in. We cleaned it out ourselves and decided if it didn't work we would leave anyway and limp home if we had to (2600km).

At this stage we were too late to make it to the Cape at all, and we were due to head west to Undarra and Cobbold Gorge the next day. We set off and I could feel anxiety with every hill we went up, but thankfully it appeared our issues had been fixed!

We were able to enjoy Undarra Lava tubes and Cobbold Gorge. We then started heading south towards Winton. Just before Winton we could hear a noise so pulled over, popped the bonnet, and coolant was spraying everywhere; it was overheating! We did notice the radiator cap was a little broken. This was a completely different issue to before. Once it had cooled down we carefully drove the car the 15km into Winton to the servo in the hopes of finding a radiator cap. Unfortunately one servo in Winton was closed, and the other didn't sell radiator caps and we didn't have any service to call RACQ.

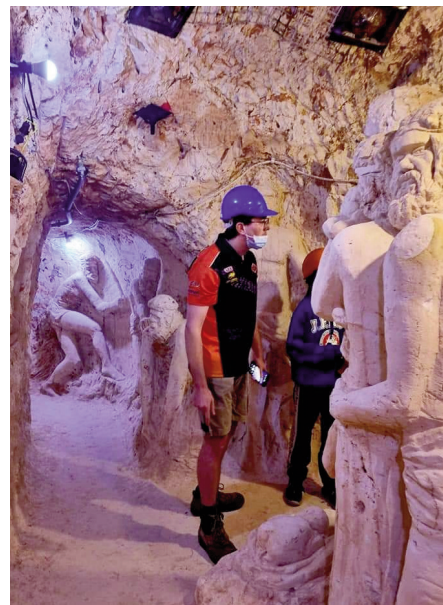
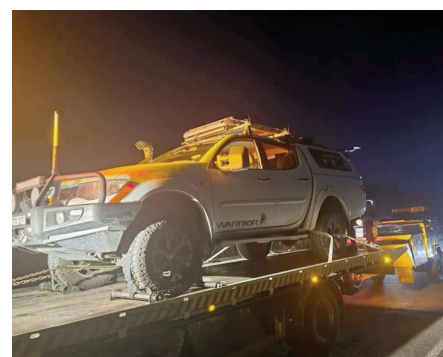
We had booked to go to The Age Of Dinosaurs in Winton, so pressed on to do that, which would give the car a chance to cool down properly. When we had finished the next town was Longreach and that was another 177km away! We took it slow, keeping a very close eye on the temperature gauge. We literally rolled into the servo at Longreach and it started overheating again. We spoke to the mechanic there and he seemed to think it could actually be the motor, as this is a common issue with the Mitsubishi MN Tritons. He advised us that if we were able to get it home to Albury, we should do it as it would be at least a month before they could fix it.

From early on when we had our car issues, two families from our 4x4 Club had expressed to us that if we needed them to come and get us to let them know and they would be there. It was time for us to call them. We had put it off, not wanting to put them out, and looked into other options but they were not going to work without being stuck in Longreach for a longer period. We made the call and they started arranging a car trailer for one of the cars to tow the car home and the other car would tow our camper trailer home. They left the next

morning to come and get us to take us home. How lucky are we to be part of such an amazing Club, we can't thank Jen, Marion and Brett enough.

We did have NRMA Premium roadside assist, but used up the majority of our allowances in the three weeks we were stuck in Cairns. Before the trip we had taken the car in for a service and it was looked over to make sure it was right for the trip. It just goes to show that no matter how prepared you are, these things can go wrong. Although not much went right with our trip, we did still get to experience camping in the Daintree and doing the Bloomfield track, and pretty much everything around Port Douglas, Mossman, Palm Cove Cairns and Mission Beach. We still don't know exactly what our issue is with the car, it's booked in for next month. We will look at doing the Cape again though, as soon as we can.

**Corinne Wayenberg**







# Mildura 4WD Club

PART 2

## Exploring The Hay River Track & Madigan Line



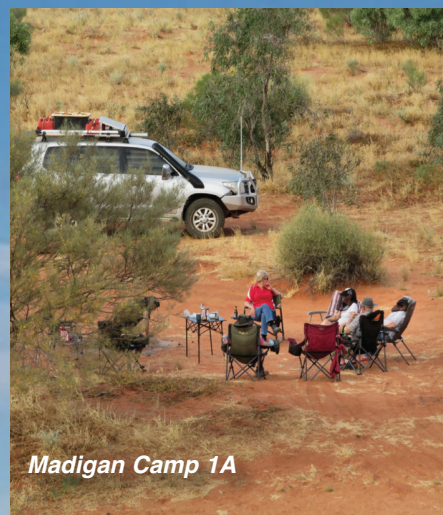


**May 19th, 2022. Trip notes by Adrian**

After a peaceful night and stunning sunrise at Camp 1A, which is still on Andado Station, we departed for Camp 2. Making good time on an excellent easy track, we pretty much followed the swales north between dunes. Under a grey sky but in high spirits, we were finally on the "Madigan"! The desert was soooo green with recent rain!

At Camp 2, first nation's people ask for visiting and camping respect. This is near a secret women's area. We viewed in the distance "The Twins", 2 rounded knolls jumping up from an otherwise featureless plain. Heading generally east toward Camp 5,

skipping Camps 3 and 4, which have no public access, Hema had us completely off grid. Following 2 little used wheel tracks picking our way back to the main track through coolabah scrub, creeks and flood plains it was great to know ExplorOz had us on track. Camp 5 is approximately 280km from Mt Dare. Camp 6 was our lunch spot and Glen had a must have camp find! 4 metres of mangy rope! Really Glen? With a stiff cold breeze encouraging us to move along we bolted without delay. Dunes were now getting to be "real" but very chopped up with large moguls on both approach and downside. Track maintenance is nil. Once everyone worked out their ideal tyre pressure, there wasn't too much drama. The eggs and beer in the fridge...well they



**Madigan Camp 1A**

survived. We had the track to ourselves with evidence of only 2 vehicles in front of us recently, we reckon within the past 2 days.



**Madigan Camp 1A**



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Windscreen Protection





**Madigan Camp 2**



**Colson Track Intersection**

Camp 7 was very exposed to the wind, and with rain spitting we moved on hoping Camp 8 would be better. The last dune before Camp 8 was a real test with all but the 200 series getting over. The 200 was buried soooo deep we thought anytime soon it would be in artesian water. With vehicles in front and behind, the track was well blocked. Jo and Leo decided they were up for chicken track creation to get past as it was getting dark; both went in opposite directions but managed to get over. Finally, after what seemed like 2 hours, the sand let go and the 200 sullenly snuck into camp. (Good old Maxtraxs, shovels and a snatch strap)

Stories and jokes around the fire that night, tucked behind our wind break, was hilarious and at times ...???!!!! What goes on.... stays on the bus but a tease or two; Old Farts wagons, same sex Ranger and the substitution of clippers and razors with control burn using naked flame!! What could go wrong? Really there wasn't that much grog consumed. A great day, thanks everyone.

#### **May 20th, 2022. Trip notes by Maureen**

After yesterday's drama on top of a sand dune, and a pleasant evening in the swales between the dunes, we were off again at 8:30am.

First thoughts - I'm mad!! As Robin announces - "a few moguls over the top, then back to crap".

This is the second or third day on the Madigan Line. The track is well formed so we do not have to resort to using GPS. It's a one way track, West to East, so probably no need for flags either, although we do have them flying high. The track is quite firm through the flat areas or swales, but on top of dunes the sand is loose and tracks are covered by loose sand as soon as a vehicle moves across.

The grey box we, (Leo & Maureen), have on the pack rack is apparently sliding side to side as we wobble through holes up the dunes. If we have to thump up the dune through the moguls, contents thump inside the box. I grit my teeth and try to ignore what I know is happening inside the grey box!

We had two tries at one dune but had to resort to letting more air out - now down to 18 PSI. This, and maybe more speed, enabled us to meet the crew on the other side.

Here and there we are seeing burnt areas, some small, just a bush, others larger areas. Theories abound as to the purpose and person's or nature responsible. The consensus arrived at, I think, was locals igniting areas as they drove through - maybe promoting new, fresh grass growth. A big burnt patch provoked a comment - "got their money's worth out of that match".

A soft dune top provoked the warning from Robin "a pig-root there". As a horse rider, I knew what to expect from that dune! Fresh camel poo was noted on tracks, but we didn't see the culprit.

Morning tea was had at Camp 9 and the plaque

appropriately photographed.

With the sand warming, the tailenders had to have a couple of tries to get over dunes. Jo was an absolute standout, with a very appropriate vehicle, 3L Nissan and her great driving skills.

Robin encouraged us with information or comments after he had traversed dunes. Today was a day to "tighten your jock straps, boys".

Leo was on a steep learning curve on this trip, having to learn the abilities and disabilities (safety features) of the Mazda BT 50. His past dune driving experience was in our beloved old Nissan. But with expert advice on hand, he learnt the intricacies of modern technology and used it efficiently. In particular, a flashing 4L meant 4 Low had NOT been selected.

At Camp 11 there was a notebook in which to make comment. There we learnt there was a group or two a day or so ahead of us, but we never did see them. We passed Camps 12 and 13 in the afternoon under blue skies, all in T shirts now.

The high dunes were left behind by this time, with more small bushes among the spinifex. However, the trade-off for dunes was a wretchedly rough track over both the long low dunes and the swales, with no let up at all. This was probably due to past traffic hiking along when they could, thus creating more corrugations - self-inflicted, you might say!

So, by Camp 14, all drivers were complaining of sore shoulders and passengers were also tired of the thumping! We had intended to camp at 14, but the area was not conducive to a camp, so we moved on the last 20 kms or so to Camp 15 on the Hay River, where we shared a camp oven dinner. Robin and Di had done the bulk of the preparation, for which we thanked them by devouring the scrumptious pork, roast veggies, greens, and red wine soaked pears and cream. Spoilt rotten were we!

We were now in beautiful treed, but dry river country. We also met fellow travellers coming up the Hay River Track but congratulated ourselves on having crossed the Madigan Line on the Simpson Desert, joining a growing





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number of other stalwarts to do so – and probably not repeat!

### May 21st, 2022. Trip notes by Glen & Di

Federal Election Day. The day started a little later than usual (9:30am) due to the clean up after the delicious group camp oven cook up the night before at Madigan Camp 15. Today we commenced the run up the Hay River track proper and what a huge change in the driving conditions that was.

In direct contrast to previous days travel along the Madigan Line's multitude of dunes and swales, the track was at most times along one of the many the riverbeds proper with the occasional detour up one bank or another. The track meandered along the riverbed mostly through shady trees, and it was evident that the river had been running recently with stands of healthy trees and patches of thick lush green vegetation. A bush banana vine was also seen. The other major difference was the amount of traffic we encountered with a steady stream of vehicles travelling in both directions. We hadn't seen another vehicle since days before. There was a couple of casualties today, one with a badly skinned knee and one testing positive for Covid. And so, the day's drive went with the riverbed never too far away. After taking a detour from the track out to view Lake Caroline and its red and pitch black pebbled bed, camp was made in a sandy section of the Hay River not far from the Lake Caroline access track. Another excellent camp was had with a light wind seeing the wind break deployed for the first time for the trip and so another great day ended.

As we travelled north along the Hay, we ended up playing 'tag' with two other groups. A group of 6 on what appeared to be a tag along and a large 4WD truck/camper accompanied by a 4WD towing a camper, one of which had fuel filter problems. A third group was known to be en route, and with tight time constraints they were rushing to do the Hay in one day – a bit of a "why bother". We heard them pass after we had set up camp for the night.

### May 22nd, 2022. Trip notes by Robin

Our camp at Lake Caroline was just off the main riverbed and a mixture of hard and soft sand with soft clay near the edges. After packing up and preparing to leave, Glen drove a short distance from his campsite into the riverbed. Unfortunately, he had stopped in a spot of soft sand and enjoyed it so much he decided to stay a bit longer. Most of the rest of us drove straight from our camp and onto firmer ground. Dr Phil unsuccessfully attempted to snatch Glen out of his resting place. He then deployed his roll-up tracks, which again proved to be useless in soft sand. After nearly joining Glen in the bog, he abandoned the snatch and drove on to firmer ground. In the end 4 Maxtraxs were deployed allowing Glen to easily drive out of the sand.

From our camp we continued along the Hay River Track stopping at Dingo Well and crossing the Tropic of Capricorn – one of the most ornate tropic of Capricorn signs any of us had seen.

Near this location was supposed to be a monument (aluminium sign nailed to a tree) for Andrew Harper who crossed Australia along the Tropic of Capricorn. As this was on the other side of the river we decided it could stay there.

This last section of the track was still scenic but becoming quite corrugated in spots. At one stage we passed a group of three vehicles heading south. We stopped to let them pass but they also stopped -100m away until they had grouped up. When they finally passed we realised why they had been so coy. The first and last vehicle was painted with the weird, chequered pattern used to disguise the outline of new models. Whilst it may be important for the purists, they looked pretty much like any other Ford Ranger to me.

We continued on to Batten Hill where we had intended to camp for the night. With the passing of Lindsay Bookie, the "caretakers" house appeared to be abandoned and the campground was a bare patch of earth with drop toilets and supposedly donkey heater showers. It was completely uninviting so we decided to continue on to either the Marshal River Rest Area or Jervois Station. The 75km road from Batten Hill to Jervois Station was atrocious – very heavily corrugated with no way to escape it.

The Marshal River Rest Area had a drop toilet and looked inviting, but we were all low on fuel and Jervois Station had proper toilets and hot showers, so we drove the extra 2km to Jervois, refuelled and set up camp for the night. Hot showers were enjoyed by all.

As it was Maureen's birthday, we celebrated with a Sticky Ginger Pudding adorned with some glow sticks purchased at the Pink Roadhouse and ice-cream. Maureen was presented with a fluffy pink stubby cooler donated by the "new" operators of the Pink Roadhouse.

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As it was Maureen's birthday, we celebrated with a Sticky Ginger Pudding adorned with some glow sticks purchased at the Pink Roadhouse and ice-cream. Maureen was presented with a fluffy pink stubby cooler donated by the "new" operators of the Pink Roadhouse.

### **May 23rd, 2022. Trip notes by Jo**

Today starts our journey home. We have all chosen to take the more interesting (maybe longer) way home, rather than scurry into Alice Springs and down the black top. The risk being that the floodwaters flowing from the Diamantina Lakes would cut the track to Birdsville and/or beyond and strand us.

So, out of Jervois Station and on to the Plenty Highway, heading to Boulia, 477kms east. The Plenty is a major route, quite wide, mostly dirt, but well maintained, so we sat on 80 kph most of the time. Luckily, there was a light breeze to take the dust off to the left for a while.

Also lucky for the oncoming wheelbarrow man we met – towing a small cart with all his possessions. I can't fathom the mind set of those embarking on such an experience! His story would be worth listening to. However, we sailed past him!

The breeze did not last, so the bulldust hovered at times as we saw the number of trees increase and decrease in size over the kms. The Arthur Creek was wide and treed, but bone dry, as were the floodways, some of which were bituminized, while some of the dirt ones required a little decrease in speed.

Cattle yards, tanks, windmills, and the odd cattle truck now and then reminded us that this land is actually farmed. As we approached the Queensland border, a green tinge of feed was becoming more apparent. The fluffy clouds in the distance improved the photography, but still allowed us to enjoy the sunshine.

Tobermorey Station is virtually on the Qld/NT border, but we had no need to visit the station having fuelled up at Jervois. However, we stopped for the obligatory photos entering Queensland from NT and a time change. The road is now known as Donohue Highway. It is being progressively sealed to Boulia, so speeds of 100 kph were common on the black top. Some lucky members saw a group of wedge tailed eagles gathered near the roadside and others slowed down for a largish, greenish-yellow goanna to cross the road.

Di found us a lightly treed pull off for lunch, after which the dirt was as good as bitumen for some time. We left the turn off to Roxborough Downs on our left and later the Glenormiston Station on the right. The Georgina flows across this Channel Country area, but was not significant, Cottonbush Ck being the

only water way we noticed. The grass was quite lush as we passed Herbert Downs to the right and their cattle yards. Most of the road was bitumen from here into Boulia, with a few flood ways and low hills in the distance.

Camp was made just out of Boulia past the Racecourse, and into the free camp area around the Burke River. We were certainly not alone here joining motor homes, caravans and campers, but found appropriate niches among the beautiful gum trees and lush grass growth to make another fab camp.

A few hours were to be set aside the next morning to refuel and explore the town of Boulia, the capital of the Channel Country and home of the mysterious Min Min Lights.

### **May 24th, 2022. Trip notes by Dr Phil**

Late start at Boulia and into town for some shopping, fuel, and a look around before heading off along the blacktop to Birdsville. Viewed a Waddi tree in Boulia which was a corroboree site for several old tribes and a little down the track was an information board where we discovered the Waddi tree was the rare and ancient Acacia Peuce.

On the road we came across a group of about 30-40 cyclists and support vehicle from the Sunshine Coast cycling group. They were spread out over about 10 km heading north. The stragglers were making hard work of it.

We pulled into the Vaughan Johnston lookout and had a great view of the surrounding countryside, and then stopped for lunch at Bedourie before continuing on to Birdsville.

The unsealed section of the road from Bedourie to Birdsville was closed due to flooding but Bedourie info centre advised us to take the chicken track via Lake Machattie – Hema and ExplorOz variously called this road the Flood Bypass or Detour Route. While the map showed numerous tracks it was in reality a single road (with farm tracks off it), extremely well formed and in excellent condition. Better than some of the more major roads we had travelled. We went straight to the caravan park and set up before having a shower and a few drinks at the hotel, returning later for another good pub meal before heading back for the night. At the caravan park we met up again with some of the bikers who crossed the Simpson and a convoy of 40 vehicles on some sort of rally.

Meanwhile we had discovered the river was rising and had cut the road. Robin arranged with the local police officer, Senior Constable Stephan Pursell, to get escorted across the causeway in the morning at 7:30am. Unfortunately, we had not immediately refuelled at Birdsville and the local servo closed at

6:00pm and was not due to open until 8:00am, half an hour after we were scheduled to leave. However, the servo agreed to open a 6:30am so we could refuel and make our 7:30am escape. Note to self – always refuel immediately on arrival.

### **May 25th, 2022. Trip notes by Geoff**

With more rain overnight and with the expectations of being stranded in Birdsville, most of the crew were up before their alarms went off and were breaking camp. Prior arrangements at the fuel servo saw us waiting before dawn to refuel and get to the causeway before daylight. About 7:00am we were lined up to cross the causeway when the local constabulary showed up as Robin had pre-arranged with them. They crossed first to check for depth and flow, gave us the "all clear" to proceed across the flooded Diamantina causeway. At 7:10am we entered the causeway water with reported depth of 600mm and with a strong flow. All cars crossed the flooded causeway with no concerns but a lot of worry. Once we had all crossed, we started our way to Innamincka.

We later found out that the Diamantina crossing was soon closed after we crossed at water depth of over 1 meter. Good planning and information gaining on Robin's part – thank you mate.

Picked up the Birdsville Development Road out of Birdsville, past the racecourse and then the 160 kms to Betoota. Black top soon became gravel with a section of the road flooded, and no road closed signs as we proceeded through slowly at a depth of about 200mm so that didn't cause too many problems. 9:00am saw us pull up for morning stop, and after such an early start to the day it was welcomed. Continuing on through low level land there was a number of flooded areas that looked like inland seas as the Diamantina was spreading out. Pulled up at an interesting stop where the locals had made a stone image of the rainbow serpent that wrapped around a small hill. This site is called Sculptures of the Dreamtime.

Next stop was the thriving metropolis of Betoota, which includes a pub and perhaps a jail site. We downed a beer, a hot pie and had a chat with the publican in the pub. It was here we found out that the causeway was closed after we got through, and that we were the last group to get out for some time. Leaving Betoota saw us traveling through jump up country, took the turn off to Deon's Lookout which gave a 360o view of the country. Left the lookout and traveled through more of the jump up country taking us to the Arrabury Road to travel the 290kms to Innamincka.



The rest of the trip was through swales and amazingly green country heading to Innamincka which was without incident. 70kms from Innamincka we pulled up at the Burke and Wills Dig Tree site. We walked around for a while taking in the history of the isolated location. It was here there was concern about the fast flowing and water height of the Cooper Creek so we decided not to camp at the Dig Tree but to push on to Innamincka.

Arriving in Innamincka and another big day, we fuelled up straight away and found a campsite. Some went to the pub for a meal, some stayed at camp and made their own gourmet concoctions. The fire was lite a bit late that night, but we sat around it laughing, lying and reminiscing over the last 24 hrs with a drink in hand.

Bed - sleep - wake and repeat.

#### **May 26th, 2022. Trip notes by Maureen**

T'was another warmish moonlight night camping on the Innamincka Common of the Cooper Creek. By this time, we had outrun the floodwaters coming down the Diamantina and Cooper Creek so we could stop rushing and enjoy the rest of the journey.

This was deemed a sleep in day, after our night at the Pub for tea. We were up at 7:00am and very soon a number of cars arrived, many of the occupants carrying clip boards. The group of about 30 gathered nearby under a large old gum tree. I ventured to ask an indigenous member what was the purpose of the gathering. It seems Queensland Judges have been travelling to meet Indigenous people re Native Title Claims. Today was about this Common on the Cooper. No doubt we will hear more in time. Glen met a chap from Gol Gol who was travelling with the Judges providing accommodation and food for the group.

As we left Innamincka, we had a good look at the rising Cooper Creek before heading off down the Strzelecki Track, now a bitumen road called Dillon's Highway. We had wanted to take the Old Strzelecki Track, but it was closed. 45 km down the road, we hit the Moomba Rd and turned right, hoping to see Moomba, but we plebs were not allowed into the good sized company town run by SANTOS. There are approximately 115 gas fields and 536 gas wells, some of which we saw on our travels. We travelled further south to near Merty Merty Station, where we crossed the dry Strzelecki Creek and headed for Cameron's Corner. As our wood supply was dwindling a little, we stopped en route to replenish our supply - chainsaws and gloved hands to the rescue.

This road was quite good, with the occasional hole to be avoided, some dunes to be crossed, but a piece of cake for us. Dips and dunes was the talk, then a stop for lunch by a lagoon with ducks. Glen found some wild tomato plants nearby in quite a green landscape to which we had become accustomed. Robin, as lead vehicle, confronted a dingo. It was running hard but turned left and bolted for the scrub when an on-coming vehicle approached.

The clouds built up a little as we neared the Corner, having passed well fed cattle, some of which belonged to Bollard's Lagoon, a station producing organic beef. The owners, Grant and Gina Riek took over from their parents who settled there in 1959. They have 4000 head of Herefords. Although it is strictly desert country with many red sandhills, in between these the swampy ground grows clover in the winter and grass in summer.

Before setting up camp at Cameron's Corner, we all visited the cairn erected to note the border of Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia and then enjoyed a drink at the pub and a hot shower. So clean as whistles, we enjoyed another evening under the stars with a roaring fire and wind breaks to thwart the breeze.

#### **27th May 2022 Trip notes by Glen & Di**

Cameron Corner camp was our starting point for the day's trip heading south towards home. The morning's camp pack-

up was interfered with by a very inquisitive rooster that at one point flew up into the back of the Hilux to check out our set up. First stop for the day was at Tibooburra for a sausage roll and morning tea break and checkout the replica of Sturt's boat.

Second stop was at Milparinka to check out the changes to the historic precinct. The Albert Hotel has been fully restored and is again operational, but it was a bit early for a beer. The courthouse has also been restored and operates as an art gallery, museum and souvenir shop. And one other building is currently being renovated but not yet open to visitors. We wandered around the town and found the only Sturts Desert Pea of the trip. It was an unusually large plant but only one branch had flowers. It would be magnificent in full bloom. The weather had turned very cold with a strong chilled wind, so our visit was relatively short.

Continuing on we stopped at Packsaddle Roadhouse for lunch and a rest stop. The afternoon was a drive towards Broken Hill to find our last campsite. With camp spots few and far between, and after finding those not too suitable due to recent heavy rain etc, we stopped for a group meeting at the Mount Gipps turnoff where the property owner caught up with us on her way home from Broken Hill. We followed her advice and decided to camp at the Mt Gipps station campground, which turned out to be a very good call. The weather was turning cold by this stage and the open chimney fireplace housed in the enclosed roofed area was very welcome, as was the well set up camp kitchen. As usual we were carrying a substantial quantity of wood, and lit a large fire in the fireplace and enjoyed nibbles and dinner in the warm enclosure. Later in the evening the station owner bought a bag of wood for sale but given what we were carrying it was not needed.

We had a good discussion with the very accommodating owners and Mt Gipps could well be on for a future club trip. Given the weather and the lack of accommodation in the area, Mt Gipps station was very welcome and proved to be a great spot for our last camp of the trip.

#### **May 28th, 2022. Trip notes by Robin**

This was the last day of the trip so, after packing up we started the day with a communal breakfast of bacon and eggs cooked in the camp kitchen and prepared for a straight run home. From Mt Gipps we headed to Broken Hill to refuel and air up – a surprisingly difficult process as one servo ran out of fuel and another had no air. After scattering to find fuel and air, we congregated at the Westside Plaza shopping centre for coffee before resuming our journey.

Dr Phil's wife, Ruth had advised him that she would be travelling to Whyalla to visit the children and then moving on to Port Lincoln to visit other children. As the distances to Whyalla and Renmark were comparable, Dr Phil left the trip to travel to Whyalla to meet up with his wife.

For the rest of us, next was a quick stop at the Popiltah rest area for afternoon tea then an uneventful trip home on the blacktop to Mildura.

**In summary an interesting and eventful trip (racing the flood waters home) enjoyed by all.**

**Total Distance - 5,000km.**

**Average speeds:**

**Blacktop ~100kph but 110kph to Hawker and from Broken Hill**

**Reasonable dirt roads ~80kph**

**Rough sections and dunes – drive to the conditions**

**Total fuel**

**Unknown/not recorded – but Mt Dare to Jervois Stn (Madigan and Hay) @ 40-60kph - 15L/100km normally 18L/100**

**Worst price \$3.05 at William Creek, but all the others ~\$2.00 to \$2.40**

**Total days – 15.**





## 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 grandchildren 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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