



# Free Wheeling

**Official Newsletter of the Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club**

Registration No A0002184F

APRIL 2007



The Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club Inc is an affiliated club of the  
Victoria Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs Inc (VAFWDC)  
[www.vafwdc.org.au](http://www.vafwdc.org.au)



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## COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT 2006-2007

President	Ashley Martin	0438 600 904
Vice President	John Partridge	0428 331 211
Treasurer	Craig Major	0432 876 699
Secretary	Paul Ryan	0438 121 148

## GENERAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Assistant Secretary	Derek Hymas	0438 259 605
Trip Coordinator	John Partridge	0428 331 211
Events Coordinator		
Training Coordinator	Michael Rodger	0412 530 666
Newsletter Editor	Julie Capper	0411 530 464
Association Delegate	John Partridge	0428 331 211
Training Officers	Mark Kochan	0412 544 668
	Ashley Martin	0438 600 904
	John Partridge	0428 331 211
	Michael Rodger	0412 530 666
New Member Contact	Mark Capper	0411 530 484
Web Manager	Anthony Van Buiten	0413 784 074
Librarian		

Forward Articles & Photos for the Newsletter to:-

**[editor@vfwdc.com](mailto:editor@vfwdc.com)**

**Please forward all contributions prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month**

## CLUB DETAILS

Registered Name:	Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club Inc
Registration No:	A002184F
All Correspondence:	The Secretary VFWDC Inc PO Box 778 Dandenong Vic 3173
Web Site:	<a href="http://www.vfwdc.com">www.vfwdc.com</a>
Meetings:	Held first Tuesday of each month excluding January (no meeting). The November meeting is held on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month due to Melbourne Cup public holiday.
Location:	Dandenong Library Stuart Street, Dandenong 3175

*The opinions given herein are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Committee of Management, or the Member body of the VFWDC Inc*

## President's Report

Hello and welcome to another month of *Free Wheeling*.

Although the venue for the Family Day was changed to Jells Park it was a good day had by those who attended. I was disappointed that the lack of interest forced us to change the original plans. Although members were given plenty of notice, it appears the busy lifestyles – and work commitments – don't allow us do everything we would wish. Hopefully interest in this type of event will be greater next year and we can have another try.

In a previous newsletter we mentioned the possibility of assisting with one or some of the bushfire clean up programs currently under way. Four Wheel Drive Victoria is looking for volunteers to assist track clearing in the Mansfield and Heyfield areas. Unfortunately we have not been given a lot of notice, but hopefully some members may be able to offer support. This would benefit all 4WD users and the work appears to be relatively easy track clearing. If you are interested please refer to details in the forthcoming trip section.

We are contacting FWDVic to ascertain whether further working bees are scheduled and to possibly receive more advanced notification. This will enable us to formally conduct a club trip and give members details of dates etc. Once we receive information on suitable working bees we will post the information via email and newsletter.

There have been some changes within the committee positions. Mark Capper has had to step down as Vice President due to a work promotion and after hours education. Due to Mark's great committee activities to date he will remain a general committee member which will allow him to continue to take an active role, even if it will be via electronic communication. We all wish Mark the best with his new role and hope he finds time to still visit us. The Vice President role will be filled by John Partridge. As you are aware, John held the position of VFWDC President for two years so he will fit straight in. John will also retain the Trip Coordinator role so this should keep him busy.

We are trying to finalise guest speakers for the up coming general meetings. Hopefully a representative from Black Wolf camping products will be at the May meeting showing their range of products. June meeting we have a representative from RF Industries. They handle a range of CB aerals and solar panels. Both product ranges are very useful in our recreation and they will have a few specials for all of us to spend our hard earned cash. Further information will be in the forthcoming Newsletters.

See you on the next trip – or at the next meeting.

Ashley Martin  
President

## Minutes of the General Meeting – 7 February 2007

The meeting was held at Dandenong Library and opened by President Ashley Martin who welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### Present:

There were 23 members present as per the attendance book.

### Apologies:

Brian Martin  
Derek & Jan Hymas  
David & Rosalie Hughes  
Maxine Ryan  
Verrille Rodger  
John Partridge  
Norma Stephenson  
Mark Capper  
Aline Van Buiten  
Anne Pettigrew  
Anne Simpson

### Visitors:

Nil

### Minutes of the February meeting:

Accepted: Tim Axtell  
Seconded: Michael Rodger

### Matters Arising:

Nil

### Correspondence in:

ARB 4x4 Action  
Overland Cruising  
Otway Four Wheeler – Jan & Feb Issues  
LROCV Newsletter  
Cross Country Jeep Club  
Pajero Club  
Association – Request for Bushfire Recovery Assistance  
Association – First Aid Training  
Association – Rally for the Bush  
Yarra Ranges 4x4 Club – 4x4 Swap Meet  
State Library – Request for January Newsletter  
Infront Camping – Information  
Gilwell Park – Invoice for Xmas Party  
Australia Post – Invoice for PO Box  
Bush Telegraph  
Eureka Echo  
Network News

### Correspondence Out:

Club Newsletter

### Treasurer's Report:

Same as per February's Report. No business has been transacted this month.

Accepted: Roger Baird  
Seconded: Pat Casey

### Tea duties:

Roger Baird & Mark Kochan  
Thank you ☺

### Raffle:

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: Thermos Flask won by Paul  
2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: Wine won by Graeme  
3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: Free Range Eggs won by Ashley  
4<sup>th</sup> Prize: Free Range Eggs won by Julie

### Trips Reports:

Michael gave the trip report for the A Grade Trip in February. The group headed into the Big River area on the Friday night, stopping at the Black Spur pub for tea on the way. They camped at Frenchman's and had a leisurely start on Saturday morning. The group explored some of the better tracks in the area that were still open such as Short Cut 2 and Reefton Logging Track. Most of the tracks in the area were closed at the top end where DSE had put in a huge fire break. Sunday was spent exploring some of the tracks in the Narbethong area before heading home.

Craig gave the trip report on the Avoca weekend. The group stayed at the old Glenpatrick Footy Oval near Elmhurst and spent the Saturday exploring the tracks around Avoca. Craig even managed to get the zook on one wheel. Sunday was spent exploring some of the tracks in the Mount Cole area.

### Association Report:

Nil

Ashley gave a brief report on some of the Huts that had been destroyed in the recent High Country fires. The following huts have all been completely destroyed:

Bluff Hut  
Craigs Hut  
Brooklyn Hut  
Howfield Refuge

Of those that remain the fires came as close as 15 metres.

### General Business:

Could all members give some thought to who we might like to invite to the club as a guest speaker for a future meeting.

James Holden has had to resign his role as Events Coordinator due to work commitments.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank James for all his hard work in this role and wish him all the best with his new business venture.

Mark Capper has to step back from his role as Vice President due to work commitments. (Update – the committee has (in accordance with the club constitution) taken a vote and has asked John Partridge to step into the role of Vice-President for the remainder of the year, which John has kindly agreed to do. Mark will continue as a general committee member for the remainder of the year as well. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Mark for the excellent and active role he has undertaken as VP.

On behalf of the committee and all the members, we would like to congratulate Craig & Marijke on their engagement.

#### Other Business:

The issue of whether the club had received any money from the Ritchies Community Benefits scheme was raised. Craig will check the bank statements and report back to the club.

#### Meeting Closed:

9.25 pm

#### Next Meeting:

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2007 at 8.00pm at Dandenong Library

Sign yourself up as a Yahoo User at

<http://groups.yahoo.com>

(There is no charge for this service)



Then go to

<http://autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/vfwdc>

Click on “Join this group”.

To keep non members out of the group, your membership will need to be approved.

Any problems email:

[alfantz@optusnet.com.au](mailto:alfantz@optusnet.com.au)

## VFWDC MERHCANDISE

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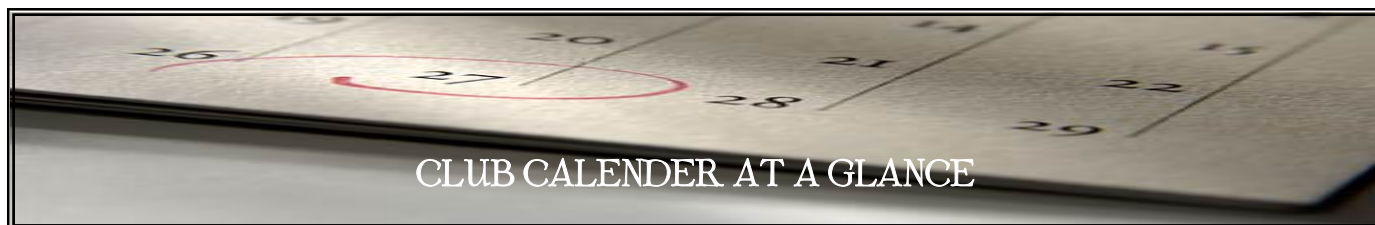
## **Wanted**

Newsletter Editor



If you are interested in taking on the role of  
Newsletter Editor, please contact  
Ashley Martin ([president@vfwdc.com](mailto:president@vfwdc.com))  
or Julie Capper ([editor@vfwdc.com](mailto:editor@vfwdc.com))

Full assistance will be given during the hand over.



## CLUB CALENDER AT A GLANCE

### APRIL

Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup>	Mansfield or Heyfield	John Partridge	0428 331 21
Tuesday 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Club Meeting	Ashley Martin	0438 600 904
Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> to Monday 9 <sup>th</sup>	Easter Weekend - Big Desert Explorer	John Partridge	0428 331 211
Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup>	Committee Meeting	Michael Rodger	0412 530 666
Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> to Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup>	Cathedral Ranges	Michael Rodger	0412 530 666

### MAY

Tuesday 1 <sup>st</sup>	Club Meeting	Ashley Martin	0438 600 904
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup>	Committee Meeting	Julie Capper	0411 530 464
Saturday 19 <sup>th</sup> to Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup>	First Aid Course	Ashley Martin	0438 600 904

### JUNE

Tuesday 5 <sup>th</sup>	Club Meeting	Ashley Martin	0438 600 904
Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup>	Committee Meeting	TBA	TBA

### JULY

Tuesday 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Club Meeting	Ashley Martin	0438 600 904
Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup>	Committee Meeting	TBA	TBA

## Forthcoming Trips

Destination	Mansfield Or Heyfield Track Clearing Working Bee
-------------	-----------------------------------------------------

<b>Trip Leader</b>	John Partridge
<b>Contact No</b>	0428 331 211
<b>Date</b>	Friday 30 <sup>th</sup> March to Saturday 1 <sup>st</sup> April
<b>Meeting Place</b>	TBA
<b>Time</b>	TBA
<b>Grade</b>	WET: Easy DRY: Easy

### Trip Activity Details

A great opportunity to help clear tracks and open up access to 4w driver tracks through the High Country. The following information is from 4WD Vic.

See Trip Data Form for more details

<b>Vehicle Limits</b>	MINIMUM: N/A MAXIMUM: N/A
<b>Approximate Km's</b>	200
<b>Late Fuel Available</b>	PETROL: Traralgon DIESEL: Traralgon
<b>Equipment Required</b>	Gloves & suitable working clothes
<b>Maps Required</b>	N/A
<b>Radio Channel CB/UHF</b>	12

Destination	Easter Weekend Big Desert Explorer
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<b>Trip Leader</b>	John Partridge
<b>Contact No</b>	0428 331 211
<b>Date</b>	Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> April to Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> April
<b>Meeting Place</b>	TBA
<b>Time</b>	TBA
<b>Grade</b>	WET: TBA DRY: TBA

### Trip Activity Details

TBA

<b>Vehicle Limits</b>	MINIMUM: TBA MAXIMUM: TBA
<b>Approximate Km's</b>	TBA
<b>Late Fuel Available</b>	TBA
<b>Equipment Required</b>	TBA
<b>Maps Required</b>	TBA
<b>Radio Channel CB/UHF</b>	12

Destination	Cathedral Ranges
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<b>Trip Leader</b>	Michael Rodger
<b>Contact No</b>	0412 530 666
<b>Date</b>	Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> April to Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> April
<b>Meeting Place</b>	TBA
<b>Time</b>	TBA
<b>Grade</b>	WET: TBA DRY: TBA

### Trip Activity Details

TBA

<b>Vehicle Limits</b>	MINIMUM: TBA MAXIMUM: TBA
<b>Approximate Km's</b>	TBA
<b>Late Fuel Available</b>	TBA
<b>Equipment Required</b>	TBA
<b>Maps Required</b>	TBA
<b>Radio Channel CB/UHF</b>	12

### Trip Clarification

Clarification was sought regarding the level of Approval required before a trip could be considered a "Club" trip.

The following clarifications were settled upon:

- Trips do not need to be approved by the trip coordinator but he must be notified in order for the trip to be considered a "Club" trip.
- Trips may be submitted either via Trip Data Form, Yahoo Group or informally however see above to be considered a "Club Trip"
- Trips should be reviewed where necessary at committee level to ensure that the trip was within capabilities of the trip leader.
- If absolutely necessary approval for a trip may be withdrawn if the committee feel that the trip may in anyway expose the participants to an unacceptable level of risk e.g. trip being lead into a high/extreme fire risk area.

**Trip Coordinator**  
**John Partridge**







## A-Grade Trip Big River to Woods Point 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> February

Trip Leader	John & Michael	GQ Patrol
Participants	Ashley & Dan	GU Patrol
	Steve	80S Landcruiser
	Paul	80S Landcruiser
	Anthony & Mark	GU Patrol
	Carl & Andy	GQ Patrol

### Friday

The crew all met at the Black Spur Pub which is now owned by Jim Kennedy an ex Vice President of 4wd Vic. To no surprise it was parmas all round and they went down a treat. This is a great stop and having accommodation it would be worth a winter trip staying there and exploring the area during the day. We arrived at Frenchman's camping area set up tents and swags then enjoyed a couple of frothy's in front of what was measly fire of twigs.

### Ashley

### Saturday

Saturday morning was a slow start to the day as we knew we would be awaiting the arrival of Paul. So once he arrived and the last minute adjustments were made to tyre pressures and the like, we set off. Our first track was close to camp, so after a short drive along Frenchmans Creek Track we headed up Short Cut 2. It was an interesting track with deep ruts that needed to be straddled.



This was OK until there was a crossover point in ruts.

Everyone else managed to get through alright but in the absence of a front diff locks and that my car had reached the limit of its articulation I was having trouble getting through. I tried several times by backing up and changing my approach slightly to see if it would be enough of a difference to get me through. I even tried driving through the brake to see if my front wheels could get enough traction to get me through. In the end I thought I would just have to try the old tried and tested method of more right foot. This did get me through but I wasn't quick enough in my reactions and the right rear wheel fell into the rut lifting the front left way off the ground. So now I was stuck. After attaching the winch to keep the front of the car down it was a straight forward drive out.



A few hundred meters up the track we came to a heavily rutted area that had big washouts. Steve had to be different of course and drive directly into the rut to push the limits of his 'leanability'. After watching everyone else drive through and seeing there was a bit of a drop off where the rear bumper touched on a few I decided to take the chicken track. The rear bumper on the GU is notorious for popping the lights and I like mine the way they are in original configuration. We made it to the top of the track without any further incident but found that Short Cut 1 was blocked off. This spoiled our fun for the way down. We continued on to Gum Top Fireline which had changed dramatically from the last time we visited the area. The mud was gone and it was a smooth graded road. Our next bit of fun was Gum Top Ridge Rd. This was a steep hill covered with loose rocks. At the top was a large rock ledge with a tree on one side of it. Getting up the loose stuff was easy enough but the rock ledge provided everyone with a challenge. Surprisingly I managed to scramble over without damage to the vehicle. Although the spectators reported that the left rear tyre had slipped on the rim. Nothing a balance won't fix. Ashley had a close encounter with the tree at the top with no damage to vehicle or the tree. Watching it on video later that night it was even funnier the second time around. Once we cleared the ledge and continued on our way we found that the track had been blocked off at the top.



This was not a closure, but the crew putting in the fire break hadn't cleared the entrance to the track. We spent a bit of time trying to find an interesting route back to camp but we would have had to have gone a long way out of our way to find anything interesting. We decided to head back to camp and collect some firewood. The rest of the evening was spent in the usual manner.



A few drinks, dinner preparation, and the laughing at others for their misfortunes through the day.

**Anthony**

**Sunday**

It was the usual slow start to the morning for most but we were on the road by 10ish. We made our way to Marysville where we turned onto the dirt again. From memory we drove Strickland Spur Link Track followed by Strickland Spur plus a few others.



These had interesting sections but nothing to worry us. From there we headed towards Labertouche for that famous one more track. The track was deeply rutted in the middle and required some thought and direction to drive it. We did have a couple of interesting lines though. Steve decided to straddle one section only to slip in with a big thud.



Looking at the vehicle there appeared to be another dent in the rear quarter but Steve wasn't sure if it added another dent or just one from a previous trip. Anthony crossed the rut but when he tried to cross back over the vehicle had a slight lean to it. Being on the safe side we connected the winch and lowered him down to take another line.

We made our way back to Labertouche, aired up and headed home.

It was a great weekend of driving enjoyed by everyone.

**Ashley**

**Avoca  
23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> February**

Trip Leader	Ashley	GU Patrol
Participants	John	GQ Patrol
	Barry	GU Patrol
	Derek	Discovery
	Gary	GU Patrol
	Craig	Suzuki Vitara

It was early Friday evening and the group started to arrive at Elmhurst Pub for dinner. After a few drinks we all sat down to a solid meal and debated about the legitimacy of Barry's meal being called "prawns". Ashley said that it was probably tripe, but I prefer to think of it as reconstituted anonymous fish parts. After dinner and encouraged/scared by the locals in the pub picking up a guitar and starting to sing we headed to camp for a sleep.

In The morning Ashley and John ran through the days tracks which were in Ashley's words "going to be challenging". After preparing the vehicles we set off. It wasn't long before we were in low range and were picking our way up some steep trails.

Some tracks had some very interesting rock ledges and provided a challenge for most. On one steep and rocky track Derek stalled and knocked his truck out of gear. This had two outcomes i) Derek's disco lurched down the hill ii) John who was behind Derek at the time had to throw his truck into reverse and back away from Derek. After Derek



was at the top of the hill and John had made a quick underwear change we were on the move again.



Throughout the day as the group's confidence level rose the tracks became harder. At one point the group stopped to inspect an A-grade track. After drawing straws it was decided that John would have a go. This was probably best as only Ashley's and John's cars could have ever gotten up in one piece. John made it look easy and it inspired me to think of modifications that would allow the Suzuki to do the same. (I really hope that Marijke doesn't read this part).

After a few more tracks we stopped for lunch. In the afternoon we went exploring with Ashley taking the group up and down a good variety of tracks which had lots of ledges, rocks and other surprises.

It was then that we came to an interesting piece of hill, a steep climb with some rock ledges and a difficult exit. Ashley went up first while the group waited. His voice then came over the radio that "it was ok to come up, but just give him a minute so that he could get his camera out as this should be good to watch"! (Mental note: when Ashley grabs a camera you know that the next 30 seconds of your life will prove to be interesting).

The group managed to get up the hill without incident, with everyone picking their own line.



The group then headed back to camp with a quick fire wood detour and settled in.

Discussions around that night's campfire varied from; how to bend the laws of Einsteinian physics in order to go faster than the speed of light by creating a worm hole as time and space are curved to pulling one's finger to see the outcome. Varied discussions indeed!

The next day we packed up the camp site and it was decided to tackle Mt Cole, which was a short trip down the road. There was a smattering of tracks, but nothing too difficult. We made our way to the fire look-out and pondered the next move while viewing the burned out remains of large sections of bush. At the base of the mountain Derek left the group to go home and do work while the rest of us decided to creatively procrastinate the afternoon away.

During the last hour before lunch the group tackled a few more tracks. One steep, heavily rutted track provided entertainment for all as we tried to straddle ruts that were the wrong track width for every vehicle. This resulted in either the back end of the car dropping into a rut, the front end of the car dropping into a rut, or if you drive a small Suzuki, both the front and the back end of the car dropping into a rut which placed the car on a nice angle. (I did manage to drive up the rut though without being recovered or damaged.....Marijke will be pleased!)

After lunch we aired up and headed for home.

Thanks to Ashley and John for providing a trip where the participants could push themselves safely and build upon their skills. And thanks to Barry who did a great job as tail end Charlie.

*Craig*

## Labour Day Long Weekend Strathbogie's 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> March

Trip Leader	Ashley & Lesley
Participants	Brian Martin Michael, Verrille Elizabeth, Rodger & Dominique Mark Kochan Gary Smith Derek & Janet Hymas Maggie Melcher

### Friday

Ashley and I headed off on Friday afternoon at around 5.00ish with our new acquisition – yes, our own trailer – hooked on behind. Stopped at Yea for dinner (never again!) and continued on our way to arrive at James Camping Area by 8.30ish – certainly nice to be able to set up in fading daylight rather than the black of night. Even so, still took time to decide exactly where! Brian had arrived earlier and was waiting to see where Ashley considered the best place to settle for the weekend before pitching his tent.



Decision made, we set up and had a quiet ale while waiting for the Rodgers and Mark to arrive. The others were coming in on Saturday. It ended up being a late night by the time all set up and coffees and other beverages consumed.

The camp site was busier than we hoped it would be – the Black Spur 4WD Club having taken the top spot in the shade by the “creek”. It was reasonably quiet and clean, except for the public thunderbox which was in such disgraceful condition that Ashley has made a formal complaint to the local DSE who have responded with an apology.

*Lesley*

### Saturday

We woke to sunshine and bacon and eggs for breakfast. Gary and Phil arrived early and as this was to be our explore the area day, we were lined up ready to go by 10.30ish. We headed out towards Lima East on the Lima East Road, and onto Lightning Ridge Track via Pearce Road. There were a few ruts and rocks for just a small challenge on Lightning Ridge Track – nothing too serious though. This area could be called Boulder City – not to be confused with the Boulder City in Colorado USA where the men are allowed to take many many wives – sorry guys!! The rocky outcrops and huge boulders were amazing. We stopped at Carters Lookout and climbed up for a squiz at the view overlooking Lake Nillahcootie, which seems to have replaced Eildon/Bonnie Doon as the local water sport area. There were plenty of boats and other craft on the water.



After driving on for a bit we stopped for lunch at one of the small camp sites just off the road. Ashley took us on a few more tracks and then headed up “unnamed track” to see if he could find something a little more interesting. Unfortunately, this track had been dozed and blocked off at the top, so after a mini break we made our way back down to join the others. A bit more up hill and down dale driving on several of the tracks in the area and it was time to head back to camp. Although, like the rest of Victoria, this area is very dry, the landscape was pleasant and it was an opportunity to see a different part of the State.



We arrived back at camp to be greeted by Maggie, Janet and Derek. It was hot hot hot, so we all headed for the shade of our annexe and relaxed for a few hours before the usual wood chopping and fire lighting performance began. Happy Hour came and went, as did dinner, and it was time to settle around the fire for a few hours.

A good day thanks Ashles.

*Lesley*

### Sunday

The normal leisurely start to the day was followed by discussions of the day’s agenda. Originally, Ashley had planned a drive around the area with some visits to local wineries but there was some uncertainty about which ones, if any, would be open.

In the end everyone except Derek and Gary went into Mansfield to visit the market. Derek planned to enjoy a book and a snooze. Gary wanted to explore some more tracks and to search for a plane crash site. Soon after the group left for Mansfield, Gary set out and found some tracks that he reported as interesting upon his return. He also found the crash site.

The Mansfield Marketeers were disappointed in their endeavours. When they arrived, the oval where the market is held was empty. Their enquiries revealed that it had taken place the previous day.

So instead, they had a walk around the shops. Ashley went to the information centre and was told there was a winery just up the road called Bulla Wines. We had some lunch at the oval then had a drive to the winery only to find that it was closed but the lovely lady allowed us to sample some of her wines so all was not lost.

Meanwhile Derek’s snooze was disturbed by the sound of two competing radios and a generator, so he set off towards Mansfield to see if he could find the main group.

A couple of patchy phone calls with Ashley identified Lake Nillahcootie, between the campground and Mansfield as a meeting place. The day was unexpectedly warm and Ashley and the Rodgers wanted a swim. Derek arrived first and waited for the others in the shade of a few big trees.



They arrived just as he was nodding off, but since they were operating neither radios nor generators, he was pleased to see them. Everyone parked in the shade of the trees and Lesley, Maggie and Janet laid out picnic blankets and reclined in conversation.

Pointing to the north, Ashley said to Derek, "We are just going up that way for a swim." So after a bite to eat Derek went "up that way" to find the swimmers. Of course, when he got there, they were elsewhere. True to form Ashley had, in fact, led the swimmers "down that way" for a swim.



The group made its way back to camp arriving in the mid-afternoon where happy hour soon began. After dinner, the group gradually gathered around the campfire, which treated everyone to smoke in the face as the wind swirled around in all directions.

The evening passed slowly and convivially and each had their turn to be showered by sparks as the wind started to blow harder. Derek and Janet were the last to go to bed at around 11.00 o'clock and as they dug the fire in and buried the coals, the wind began to roar through the trees. By 1.00 o'clock, almost everyone had been out of bed to ensure everything that could move was tied down or in the cars or trailers. Other campers too were doing the same all around the campground as the wind roared through the trees like express trains going in all directions. Tents and awnings were buffeted and their sides pushed this way and that. As we each lay in bed, we listened to the sound of the wind roar down a hillside and waited for it to hit us in our suddenly flimsy shelters.

Hard though it may be to believe, it was so noisy that we could no longer hear Michael's snoring – some said this was a good thing, but it was a helluva way to block it out.

The wind blew all night and left off just as we were getting up. We compared notes and most of us agreed that it was the windiest night we had camped through.

**Derek**

**Monday**

Well, after Hurricane Thelma decided to visit us on Sunday night, we thought we wouldn't waste any time packing up and heading home. The wind was still blowing and the early morning looked rather ominous. But "Oh What a Night it Was!" The wind blew up and down the valley like nothing I'd ever experienced before. Most of us were up in the middle of the night fixing tent poles, taking down annexes, etc etc. Torches flashing everywhere. Perhaps looking for Tonto? Liberty and Dominique had been sleeping in the swag, but had to take refuge in the car because the swag was flapping around so much they thought it was going to take off! They were more than a little scared...

So it was off home in dribs and drabs. Brian, the Rodgers and the two of us made our way to Yea – where we stopped for a quick bite for lunch – and then it was home again home again jigatijig.

**Lesley**

## Labour Day Long Weekend Collins Hut 8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> March

Trip Leader	David Hughes	Nissan
Participants	Rosalie & Polly	Nissan
	Leigh & Anne Pettigrew	Toyota
	Ray & Dawn Brown & Sally Ann	Toyota

On Tuesday we received a phone call from Rosalie "we're going to Collins Hut on Thursday are you coming, we're leaving at 2pm". We'll let you know tomorrow as we have baby sitting duties until 3:30pm. We agreed to meet at Sale. Well we had a mad panic to pack and prepare and as usual left some things behind.

A phone call to the ranger at Dargo indicated that the track would be open later today and to ignore any signs left up. He enquired as to whether we were taking trailers to which I said yes and his reply was "oh", this did not register at the time.

We were ready, packed and connected and ready to leave by 4pm. We rang Rosalie and guess what? They had just got home and were packing. We left at 5:30pm and decided that this weekend would be a "No Stress" weekend "Pat the Dog".

The first leg of the trip was to the Darnum Hotel for tea and a lovely meal was had by all. Well worth the detour. From there our next stop was in Traralgon where David's trailer brakes had come on, they were subsequently released. Our next stop was Sale at the "Captains Lodge" Motel which was in darkness at 9pm. This motel could at best be described as 1950's style with 2020's prices; however it was a bed for the night.

Friday saw us have breakfast at McDonalds in Sale and then relocate Safeway into David & Rosalie's new camper trailer and we were off. A top up with fuel and we were on our way. A phone call from Ray and Dawn indicated that they were about an hour behind us.

A pleasant drive ensured until we reached the Wonnangatta Caravan Park where we stopped for ice, it was closed, bummer. We decided to make camp then go for a drive into Dargo for the ice. Well that was the plan.

We drove along Wonnangatta Road unsure of what to expect as a result of the fires, given that Wonnangatta Road was closed passed our turnoff.

Well what a surprise at the turnoff, it was not recognisable; a new road ran right along the ridge line and was denuded of trees to the right. Time to "Pat the Dog". We identified the track we needed to take to proceed to the hut and took off. We reached the first bend and hat to "Pat the Dog" again as this bend had turned into a VERY SHARP U Turn. Both of our trailers had to be "Jack Knifed" a number of times to get around. It was a case of the passenger giving instructions on where the edge was and how much turn you had left. This negotiated it was on to the hut or so we thought, following this new track, driving in the caterpillar tracks on very loose shale. The steepness of the top pinch had been removed.

We continued on until the pinch that takes you to river level which was now two pinches, loose but not a problem. The track was now rocky and dusty. The whole track had massive "whoopee do's" which had the tops removed by our towbars etc.



Our campsite (Goanna Flats) was reached and was in magnificent condition, the grass had been mowed and the site cleared, it was eerie as it was extremely quiet. We set up camp and as we were finishing the radio burst into life, it was "Mondo"; he was informed of the track conditions. He arrived safely and setup. We all chatted about the track and decided to check out the Hut. Too bad about the ice, it can wait until tomorrow.

The hut was in excellent condition and has been looked after well, the long drop likewise, except the two tracks there have been closed, the steps are ok. The hut now has a gas stove that connects to LPG. Continuing along the track to the river brought us to our next surprise; we could not get to the river as there was now a big culvert stopping us and any vehicle from proceeding. The rational is unclear, time to "Pat the Dog" an uneventful night was spent around the campfire.

Saturday we drove into Dargo to get some ice and an ice-cream. In my case the latter, however after a walk across the road I came back \$100 lighter in the pocket. It should be noted that the vehicles had little difficulty getting out except at the "U Turn", where two goes were required in both directions. "Daddio" decided to check out the "ridge road" this continued to a "T" intersection at which was sign posted on the right Road Closed and therefore turned left towards the "second river crossing" this was also closed, bugger. Return to camp. A Spit Roast for tea and pleasant company around the fire. More "Pat the Dog" and relaxing.



Sunday, guess what another trip into Dargo for ice, the temperature for each of the last couple of days has been in the low 30's and the ice was melting fast, I'm not sure whether this was because of the heat or the mixing with drinks. Another Spit Roast was on the agenda and we were suitably entertained by "Mondo" and Leigh talking about 4 doors, Nissan vs. Toyota, and other dribble for the rest of the night.

Monday, Mondo packed up with some difficulty, and departed, leaving us after making the decision that we could not be bothered to pack up "Pat the Dog". Later that afternoon we began to slowly clear up and prepare to the packing tomorrow.

Tuesday, being in no hurry we packed and departed about lunch time. David leaving first, me to follow when the dust settles. The radio burst into life stop where you are, a lack of momentum has stopped "Daddio" proceeding, take two, all was ok, and this was as you turn off the river and head up. I followed when clear to do so heeding the advice as to use the loud pedal, the first rise was ok but on the second lack of momentum and the "whoopee do" stopped me 2 metres from the next "whoopee do", a second attempt failed to progress, a third and a fourth the same. Time for the "Landcruiser Recovery Vehicle" to come to the rescue. "Daddio" continued to the top and disconnected the trailer and returned, in the meantime I had prepared for a tow. This tow had to be conducted in very short stages as the dust was horrendous and you could not see the edge of your bonnet. At one stage I was heading for the bank and "Daddio" the other side of the track. Over this hump and it was all go to the "U Turn" where after three attempts I was around.



We stopped for lunch downstream and re inflated the tyres etc. We arrived in Stratford in time for a late afternoon tea, where we decided that given the time the "Yarragon Pub" would be a good stop for tea, as there is plenty of parking available. After which an uneventful trip home had us arriving about 9pm.

Our thanks to David & Rosalie accompanied by "Polly", Ray & Dawn accompanied by "Sally-Ann" and to Anne accompanied by me for a very pleasant and relaxing "No Stress weekend and we look forward to our next trip in 10 days time. Roll on Khancoban.

*Leigh*



## CLUB TRIP DATA FORM

### TRACK CLEARING WORKING BEE

DESTINATION	<b>Mansfield Or Heyfield</b>
TRIP COORDINATOR	John Partridge Mob: 0428 331 211
DATE	30 <sup>th</sup> March 1 <sup>st</sup> April
MEETING PLACE / TIME	TBA
GRADE <i>Please adhere to new trip classifications</i>	WET: EASY DRY: EASY
TRIP ACTIVITY DETAILS	<p>A great opportunity to help clear tracks and open up access to 4w driver tracks through the High Country. The following information is from 4WD Vic.</p> <p><b>Heyfield Area (24/25th March and/or 30/1 April)</b> MacAlister, Butcher Country, Caledonia and Howitt Roads - These tracks have had machines through, but clubs could assist with any follow up clearing (not expected to be much), assess missing signs and report on any issues that need fixing. This would provide a suitable weekend loop and club members would need to be experienced to be able to tackle these difficult tracks. Would need to attend a briefing at 3 pm at Heyfield on the Friday. Contact will be Peter Lawrence to make arrangements. Please direct enquiries to Zac on (03) 9857-5209 or <a href="mailto:research@fwdvictoria.org.au">research@fwdvictoria.org.au</a></p> <p><b>Mansfield Area (24/25th March and/or 30/1 April)</b> The project will require volunteers to drive selected tracks within a designated area to check for missing or burnt signage, and mark signs required on a map. This will provide very useful information to enable signs to be ordered sooner and will enable Club members access to otherwise closed areas. Volunteers could also report on other issues that they see. Ideally would require a briefing on the Friday afternoon, but because of the nature of the project the briefing could be done by phone. Please direct enquiries to Zac on (03) 9857-5209 or <a href="mailto:research@fwdvictoria.org.au">research@fwdvictoria.org.au</a></p> <p>Please contact John if you are Interested in assisting.</p>
VEHICLE LIMITS	MINIMUM: N/A MAXIMUM: N/A
APPROX KMS Meeting place to destination	200
LAST AVAILABLE FUEL	PETROL: Traralgan DIESEL: Traralgan
DISTANCE BETWEEN SUPPLIES	N/A
EQUIPMENT REQUIRED	Gloves and suitable working clothes
MAPS REQUIRED	N/A
RADIO CHANNEL      CB / UHF	12