



FREE WHEELING

April 2024



VFWDC
March Magazine

Official Newsletter of the
Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club
Inc Registration No: A0002184F



VFWDC Meeting Details & Venue

The club meets on the first Wednesday of each month at 8.00pm with the following exceptions:

No meeting at Club Noble in January.

Club Noble Addresss

Upstairs Blue and Gold Room Club
Noble
46-56 Moodemere Street Noble Park
3174
Melways ref: 89 D4



This month's meeting will be held on Wednesday 3rd April at 8.00pm.

Club Committee

2023 - 2024

President	Neville Van Leeuwen	president@vfwdc.com
Vice President	Steve Miller	vicepres@vfwdc.com
Secretary	Daisy Quinn	secretary@vfwdc.com
Treasurer	Ly Ho	treasurer@vfwdc.com

General Committee

Trip Coordinator	Bruce Dunlop	trips@vfwdc.com
Magazine Editor	Luke David	editor@vfwdc.com
Association Delegate	Matt Marino	delegate@vfwdc.com

Support Positions to Committee

Web Manager	Ben Whitworth	web@vfwdc.com
Training Officer	Phil Griffith	
Merchandise	Daisy Quinn	merchandise@vfwdc.com

Club Details

Registered Name	Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club
Registration Number	A002184F
Correspondence Address	PO Box 778, Dandenong, VIC 3174
Email	secretary@vfwdc.com
Website	www.vfwdc.com

The Victorian Four Wheel Club is an affiliated club of [Four Wheel Drive Victoria](#)

President's Report

Hi All,

I hope everyone had/ has (this was written just before Easter) an enjoyable long weekend and managed to get away for a few days.

This month we have Dion from Weigh Station coming to our meeting to discuss all things weight related. I would like everyone to make their best effort to be there if they can as I know a few people will be away with Easter. If you have any questions or comments bring them along to the meeting. Also as previously mentioned if we have enough interest, we can organize a "weigh day".

We recently had our driver training that went well, so now we have several new accredited drivers in the club. I am looking forward to hearing from all those that participated, about the new skills they learned and the new confidence they gained. All those who participated will be getting a certificate as well shortly.

On a recent solo trip to the Poplars Campground in Noojee (Nice campground on the river but a bit busy) my tent finally died. I am looking to replace it possibly with an instant up black out tent. If you have any recommendations, please let me know.

As mentioned further in the magazine I will be hosting the "Family Fun Day" at Chesterfield Farm on the 13/04. This will be a purely social event where the kids can enjoy the activities and animals. Everyone is welcome to join this day, please bring a packed lunch or something for the BBQ. More details under upcoming trips.

We have a few trips coming up over the next few months (at least one a month). Currently these are filling fast/or filled so get your name down if interested. I am looking forward to joining the trip to Millers Hut.

It would also be great if some people put their hand up for a day trip or two while the weather is good. If you would like to do this but want a hand, please reach out.

Neville Van Leeuwen
VFWDC President

Club Calendar

April

Wednesday 3rd	Club Meeting	8:00pm Club Noble (Dion from Weigh Station as Guest Speaker)
Saturday 13th	Chesterfield Farm – Family Fun day	Organised by Neville (see Upcoming Trips)
Wednesday 17th	Committee Meeting (Virtual)	8:00pm
Thursday to Sunday 25th to 28th	Big Desert Wanderings Part 2	Organised by Sally, Tristan and Steve Card (see Upcoming Trips)

May

Wednesday 1st	Club Meeting	8:00pm Club Noble
Friday 3rd	Millers Hut / Lake Tali Karng	Organised by Steve Pitcher (see Upcoming Trips)
Wednesday 15th	Committee Meeting (Virtual)	8:00pm

Other Dates

8th June 2024	Bruce's Big Trip	Organised by Bruce D (see Upcoming Trips)
14th September 2024	Merringtons or O'Tooles	Organised by David B (see Upcoming Trips)
19th October 2024	50th Celebratory Dinner	Date TBC (Club Noble)

General Meeting Minutes

Date: 06/03/2024
Location: Club Noble

Time: 8:03 pm – 9:12 pm
Next Meeting: Wed 3rd April 2024

Open Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome Apologies: Daisy, Stuart and Maree, Ian & Audre, Luke David, Phil, Dave B, Ly Ho 	Neville
Minutes from previous months club meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters arising from previous minutes: Nil <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accept: Anne Seconded: Andy and Suzy 	Neville
Guests	<p>Eric – R51 Pathfinder Eric is looking forward to getting out four-wheel driving more often with likeminded people.</p> <p>Les Michelle – 2021 Ford Everest Les wants to meet people, get out four-wheel driving more and to do more camping.</p>	Neville
Correspondence	No update from Daisy	Neville
	Mailbox not checked	
	Secretary email is still with Daisy. This is to be re-assigned shortly.	
Treasurer Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As per written report from Ly Ho – Read by Neville – Written report will be in this month's club magazine. \$6000 to be retrieved from term deposit when it rolls over next month. Tis will be to help pay for anticipated 50th Anniversary expenses. 	Neville
Association News	No update from Matt Marino	Neville
Courses	<p>Chainsaw course – no takers</p> <p>As per Feb Minutes – Summary: Approximately \$495, BYO chainsaw, 3-day course from Friday to Sunday, how to maintain chainsaws, clearing fallen trees, chainsaw safety, does not include felling trees.</p>	Neville

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	1 st aid course – Outback 1 st Aid Variation – Approximately \$125.00, CPR and Survival – 1 day course – Summary – Survival, basic CPR	Neville
Incentive to Run a Trip	The club will offer \$5 membership discount towards trips organized and advertised – up to a maximum of \$20 per couple - must be advertised and shared with the club	Neville
Organising a Trip	<p>Trip signup sheets at back of club room.</p> <p>A map of Victoria is provided for picking your next destination.</p> <p>Discuss joining a trip with any of the trip organisers or other participants listed on the trip signup sheets.</p> <p>Please offer suggestions for trips or propose running a trip. If you need any assistance, the club is happy to help.</p>	Neville
Recently Run Trips	<p>Ly and Brett represented VFWDC at the Hut to Hut Marathon from Mt Buller. It is a three-day event. 100km run/walk, via Luvochs, Mt Speculation, King's Hut, ending up (Hopefully) back at Mt Buller. Whilst Brett and Ly were driving around the area. One 12km section took over two hours to traverse. They came across some nasty looking bog holes. Others turned back but Ly and Brett got through. 12km trip where they did not get out of 2nd gear. On Mt Speculation Ly and Brett provided sandwiches, water, frozen super doopers, and respite. Ferried 9 DNFs back to start. Custom pizzas were provided by Yarra Valley FWD club. Custom pizzas cooked to order in camp ovens over fires. Up at 4 am. Breakfast was also provided by a FWD club. Track was blocked by lay about cows. Back in Melbourne about 11am. Money raised goes to Mansfield Autism. People came from all over Australia.</p>	Brett

General Meeting Minutes

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Upcoming Trips	Phil advised John and Ashley are now certified to run driver training.	Phil
	Easter - Sally A surprise trip/location with chocolates	Sally
	Bruce Dunlop's Trip – 8 weeks Leaving on the King's weekend. June 2024 up to Darwin to the Tip and back down again. Going via Mildura, Oodnadatta, Alice Springs via Finke, Lamberts Centre, across the Tanami to Broome, Gibb River Road, Katherine, Mataranka, Cairns via Palmer River Roadhouse, back through Cains, Burke and Will Road House, Burke and Wills Big Tree. People are welcome to join for specific sections. Some may be joining Bruce at Cairns.	Bruce Dunlop
	John – McAllister River, 3 days camping, river crossing, camp on island, swimming hole, trout fishing.	John
	John – Driver training – Tuesday theory, driving up Friday night/sat morning. Camping at O'Tools Friday night. Beware there are several river crossings that are quite easy to cross. Approximately 6 persons are signed up as at 06/03/2024. Several more participants can be accommodated. Theory Tuesday 12 th March with practical on 16 th and 17 March around Aberfeldie. Tents, swags and rooftops are fine, however no campers - capped 4 to 8 vehicles – must be self-sufficient including food, water etc.	John
	Sally – Big Desert – Anzac Weekend, leaving Friday and back on Sunday – Blue Gum Camp site, re-attempt big red hill, camper trailer friendly – 13 vehicles going. A few have dropped out so a few more places available as at 06 th March 2024. It will be a shake down trip for Sally and Tristan's new Nissan Patrol. They will use the trip to determine what mods may be appropriate for the Patrol. 5km of very sandy dunes, Try "Big Red" again. "It will and adventure"	Sally
	Steve P – Millers Hut – Lake Tullikahn. Leaving Friday, set up camp at Millers hut. 1200m high altitude fresh water lake. Diesels will need alpine fuel or	Steve P

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	appropriate additive to prevent diesel fuel waxing. Saturday – Sentinel's Lookout, bit of a walk involved. Return trip on Saturday – Mooroka Hut if foot bridge is not closed. Horse Yard Flats and hut. Nights are expected to be very cold (at or below zero). Head back on Sunday. Nothing else planned for Sunday. Recommend bringing a chainsaw. It will be cold and a decent fire is going to be needed.	
	Steven Miller – Saturday 22 nd June to approximately 05 th July 2024 (12-14 days) – Route will be Melbourne Woomera, Coober Pedy, Lamberts Centre, to Uluru where we meet a two vehicle contingent from WA, then through the McDonald Ranges, to Alice Springs, down the old Ghan Railway, cross the Simpson Desert (West to East), Longreach (Qanta Aviation Museum), then back down to the Dish (Parkes Radio Telescope), check out the Snowy Hydro Scheme, Snow camping near Kosciusko/Jindabyne, return to Melbourne	Steven M
Intermission	There were no raffle tickets on hand so we are not able run the raffle. Raffle Prizes are jackpotting to Aprils club meeting	
IT Issues	People could not log into web site. Ben advised this was an issue for about 24 hours only. Issue is resolved.	
	Bruce Dunlop still having issues with accessing VFWDC trip emails. Ben W to sort out.	Bruce D
General Business	Se above "IT Issues"	
VFWDC 50th Anniversary Updates	Main 50 th celebration trip will be Camping at OTooles. 14-15th Sept 2024	Neville
	Club 50 th Anniversary Dinner to be held on 19 th Oct 2024 - \$20 for members, includes dinner and gifts	Neville
	Club needs nominations for "Onya Award". Email nominations to Neville at president@vfwdc.com There will be a prize for best nomination.	Neville

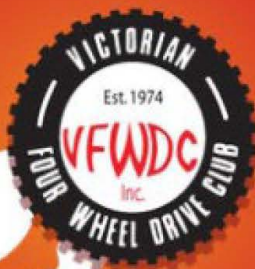
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	Matt said the inaugural winner of the “Onya Award” was for putting a roast in a pot and leaving the plastic on.	Matt
Proposed April Agenda Items	Dion is guest speaker from Weigh Station. He will discuss legal weights, ball weights. Recommend members have any questions ready for Dion.	Neville
TBA Agenda	Astronomical Society to come to either a meeting or a VFWDC social four-wheel drive outing	Neville
Raffle	No raffle tickets so not able to hold the raffle this month. Prizes to carry over to April meeting.	
Magazine	Request for content for club members – Any interesting tales, anecdotes, good or bad experiences, feedback on anything four-wheel drive related for the information of others, anything nifty you have seen or bought in the last month ...	Neville
	A volunteer is providing a Rig run down for the next issue of the club magazine.	
Merchandise	No updates. New volunteer needed to take over the Merchandise.	
Next General Meeting	Wednesday 03/04/2024	
Meeting Close	9:12 pm	Neville
Minutes taken by:		Steven Miller

Bringing Four Wheel Drivers Together



Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club Inc
www.vfwdc.com



Treasurer's Report February 2024

<u>Cheque A/C</u> Opening Balance as at 01/02/2024	\$4,160.75	
Add: Raffle	\$70.00	
Less: Hema Map	-\$16.00	
Map Laminate and Markers	-\$28.48	
Meeting Catering	-\$26.00	
Closing Balance as at 29/02/2024		\$4,160.27
<u>Term Deposit</u> Opening Balance as at 01/02/2024	\$12,022.72	
Closing Balance as at 29/02/2024		\$12,022.72
<u>Petty Cash</u> Opening Balance as at 01/02/2024	\$38.30	
Closing Balance as at 29/02/2024		<u>\$38.30</u>
Consolidated Closing Cash Position		<u>\$16,221.29</u>

This month's meeting

Our next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 3rd April, at Club Noble. We welcome all current members and any new members looking to see what our club is about. All of us look forward to the upcoming trips and we encourage anyone thinking of running a trip to speak to anyone in the committee to get some advice and guidance.

New Logo Coming Soon



Membership Fee Changes

Temporary Membership fees have increased to \$25, and these memberships will no longer be offered for snow trips. You will need to become a full member of the club to attend snow trips. General membership fees have increased to \$85 for a single and \$95 for families. Silver membership fees have increased to \$55.

Club's 50th Birthday

Just in case you weren't aware, this year marks the club's 50th birthday. A working group has been formed to organize amazing events. From this committee, we have organized a commemorative camping trip for our 50th on September 14th. We are also planning a 50th Celebratory Dinner at Club Noble, but the date is still being confirmed. Please see 50th Celebrations Brochure on page below.

Merchandise

We currently have a range of merchandise in stock, and the list of available items can be found on the pages below. If you are interested, please feel free to speak to one of the committee members during the general meeting or email us at committee@vfwdc.com.

VFWDC 50th Celebrations



Whats planned so far for our 50th Anniversary as a club

- **Dinner Celebration** so come join us for a fun night with dinner, gifts and many awards to hand out.

Date: 19/10/2024

Venue: Club Noble

- **Camping Trip** so come join us for a weekend away around Aberfeldy. This area was the main go to place when our club originated.

Location: Meringtons / O'Tooles Campground

Date: 14/09 – 15/09

Whats being planned for our 50th Anniversary

- Family Fun Day so Join us for a family fun day.

Date: TBA

Venue: Chesterfield Farm

To make our 50th Dinner Celebrations a great event we need some help!

- We need some photos from your adventures to make a slide show. Photos need to be of high quality and please send to avanderwalt@chairo.vic.edu.au please include web@vfwdc.com so we can add to the website also.

- Nominations for awards (Onya awards)

- Suggestions for other awards

- Any other suggestion can members please send any nominations to president@vfwdc.com

Merchandise

Merchandise - Get in now to get your discount merchandise!

Reversible Vest

Cost - \$30.00

Sizes – S, M , L, XL, 2XL, 5XL



Drivers Jacket

Cost - \$40.00

Sizes - S, M, L, XL



Zip up Hoodie

Cost - \$20.00

Sizes - S & M



Scarf / Beanie / Cap / Stubbie Holder

Cost - \$10.00 each



Please visit our website at VFWDC.com to view all our current membership forms and club policies.

For all new and renewal of memberships, please complete [the online form here](#)

If you are looking for a Temporary Membership, please complete the online form, [which can be found here](#).

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us via the Club Secretary on secretary@vfwdc.com

Payments:

Payment can be made via Bank Transfer. The details are as follows:

Account	Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club
Name: BSB:	Inc 633108
Account No:	111761979

Please ensure your transfer includes your name as provided on the membership application and renewal form in the reference.





Once you have made your payment/transfer, please send your completed membership application and renewal form to treasurer@vfwdc.com or you can present it to the Treasurer at any general meeting.

Thank you for choosing the Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club

If you are interested in joining [Club Noble](#) where we hold our monthly meetings, their application form can be found [here](#).

Track Classifications

Four Wheel Drive Victoria have a track grading classification scale which has been developed to assist in advising Trip Leaders and participants on 4WD trips of the type of tracks that they can expect to encounter. On most trips participants can expect that a variety of tracks will be traversed each with an appropriate rating. Trip Leaders should advise participants of the range of track ratings expected to be encountered on the planned route. The following classifications will assist in determining an overall Trip Rating:

Considerations	Easy	Medium	Difficult	Very Difficult
Overall Description	All Wheel Drive and High Range 4WD. Novice Drivers	Mainly High range 4WD but Low range required. Some 4WD experience recommended.	Significant Low range 4WD with standard 4WD ground clearance. Should have 4WD driver training.	Low range 4WD with High ground clearance. Experienced Drivers
Advisory Sign				
Expected terrain and track conditions	Mostly unsealed roads with no obstacles and minor gradients.	Tracks with some steep and/or rocky/slippery/sandy sections. May have shallow water crossings.	Tracks with frequent steep and/or rocky/slippery/sandy sections. Possible water crossings.	Tracks with frequent very steep and/or rocky/slippery/sandy sections. May have difficult river crossings.
Vehicle suitability	All wheel Drive and High Range 4WD. Can be low clearance with single range and road tyres.	Suitable for medium clearance vehicles with dual range and all terrain or road tyres.	Suitable for medium to high clearance vehicles with dual range and all terrain tyres.	Suitable for high clearance vehicles with dual range and tyres suitable for the terrain. (Mud Terrain tyres).
Recovery equipment			Recovery equipment required.	Winch / Recovery equipment required.
Driver Training / Experience	Suitable for novice drivers.	Recommended that drivers have experience or 4WD training. Recommended to be done in groups of vehicles.	Recommended for drivers with reasonable experience or 4WD training. To be done in groups of vehicles.	Drivers with extensive experience and advanced training should only attempt as there are several technical challenges. Recommended to be done in groups of four or more vehicles.
Weather	May be difficult in wet conditions.	Will be more difficult in wet conditions.	Will be more difficult in wet conditions.	Will be more difficult in wet conditions.

Upcoming Trips

Destination	Chesterfield Farm – Family Fun day
Leader/Contact Details	Neville Van Leeuwen - 0400 498 191
Dates	13/04/2024 at 10AM onwards
Meeting Place	1221 Ferntree Gully Rd, Scoresby VIC
Meeting Details	<p>Come and enjoy a social day with the whole family at Chesterfield Farm, bring along a packed lunch or some meat for the BBQ.</p> <p>Plenty of animals for the kids to see (and the adults to), a cow milking show and a sheepdog demonstration</p> <p>All tickets need to be pre-purchased</p> <p>Please book your tickets Online at https://chesterfieldfarm.com.au</p> <p>Please don't worry about booking the tractor ride or the feed bags as I will get this for everyone.</p> <p>Please confirm with me that you are coming so I can get enough rides and feed.</p>

Upcoming Trips

Destination	Bruce's Big Trip
	NAME: Bruce Dunlop MOB: 0448 318 467 EMAIL: bdunloptrip@gmail.com
Dates	King's Birthday Long weekend
Meeting Details	<p>So I'm planning a 6-8 week trip next year. Starting around the King's Birthday Long weekend.</p> <p>Please see rough order of the trip on the next page.</p> <p>The fuel and driving may be a tad too much for the proposed standard trip form. Taking enough for 1000km should cover it with water and food for 10 days per person as well. Given most roadhouses etc are 400-500 km apart it's only the Tanami to cover.</p> <p>As well, leaving earlier, starting mid way or combination of both is more than welcome for the time poor folks.</p> <p>I will take the Cub Camper, caravans at a pinch, but be prepared to park up at places, swags of course an option.</p> <p>Will have some one night stop and prop sleep overs IOT spend longer at destinations ,but will not be doing extended stays IOT get it all done in time.</p>
Grade	TBC
Vehicle Limits	TBC
Approx km's meeting	Approx. 1000km and 400-500 km apart it's only the Tanami to cover
Equipment required	Water and food for 10 days per person
Maps required	TBC
Radio Channel CB/UHF	UHF Ch 13

Destination	Bruce's Big Trip Continued
Trip Activity Details	<p>Here is the rough plan for the route:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Mildura,2. Burra,3.Oodnadatta,4. Mt Dare,5. Lambert Centre,6. Alice Springs,7. Tanami Rd,8. Wolfe Creek,9. Broome, FIFO (Fly In Fly Out)10.Barn Hill Station and or Cape Leveque, FIFO11. Gibb river Rd,12. Mitchell Falls,13. Kununurra,14. Mataranka,15. Borroloola,16. Hells Gate Roadhouse,17. Normanton,18. Cairns, FIFO again19. Palmer River Roadhouse,20. The Tip,21. Palmer River again, (great steak sanger last time),22. Cairns, FIFO ,23. Normanton,24. Burke and Wills Roadhouse,25. Cloncurry,26. Birdsville,27. Innamincka,28. Camerons Corner,29. Wilcannia,30. Hay,31. Echuca,32. Melbourne! <p>The fuel and driving may be a tad too much for the proposed standard trip form. Taking enough for 1000km should cover it with water and food for 10 days per person as well.</p> <p>Given most roadhouses etc are 400-500 km apart it's only the Tanami to cover.</p>

Upcoming Trips

Destination	Big Desert Wanderings Part 2
	NAME: Sally, Tristan and Steve Card Sally: 0435782207 Tristan: 0468958444
Dates	Thursday 25 th April – Sunday 28 th April
Meeting Details	BP Calder Park outbound 8am for 8:30am departure
Grade	WET: Medium DRY: Easy
Trip Activity Details	<p>This is a shake down trip for our new Patrol. We will head to Blue Gum campsite (no facilities) on Thursday 25 th to base camp for the weekend. Camper Trailers are able to get into the site with a couple of dunes to climb to get into it.</p> <p>Friday and Saturday will be exploring Big Desert and also having a go at Big Dune again.</p> <p>Head home on Sunday</p>
Vehicle Limits	MINIMUM: 3 MAXIMUM: 10
Approx km's meeting place to destination	Approx. 611 km
Last available fuel	PETROL: Ouyen DIESEL: Ouyen
Distance between supplies	250 KM
Equipment required	Recovery Gear. Camping equipment that makes you self sufficient for 4 days. Food and Drinks
Maps required	VIC Desert Maps Hema Maps
Radio Channel CB/UHF	UHF Ch 12

Upcoming Trips

Destination	Millers Hut / Lake Tali Karng
	NAME: Steve Pitcher Mobile: 0421 205 529
Dates	Friday 3rd – Sunday 5th May 2024
Meeting Details	BP Service Station, Princes Freeway (Pakenham Bypass), Officer (Meet 9:00 am for 9:30 am departure), GPS Coordinates: Lat: -38°0699" Long: 145°3872"
Grade	WET: Hard DRY: Medium
Trip Activity Details	Base Camping at Millers Hut (GPS Coordinates: -37° 5415" Long: 146° 7871"). From there, we can head over on the Saturday to the Sentinels lookout to view Lake Tali Karng from above (no vehicular access down to the lake itself – those that are interested can hike down to the water's edge from camp, and get back in a day, but it takes the whole day and the walking trail is really only suited to experienced hikers). Time permitting, we could also head over to Moroka Hut and/or Horseyard Hut. Either way, a packed or easy to prepare lunch is recommended for the Saturday. Camper trailers are welcome but getting into or out of Millers Hut can be quite challenging if it should rain or snow (which is possible that time of year).
Vehicle Limits	MINIMUM: 2 MAXIMUM: 10
Approx km's meeting place to destination	Approx. 350 km
Last available fuel	PETROL: Licola (Heyfield is the 2 nd nearest) DIESEL: Licola (Heyfield is the 2 nd nearest) – no Alpine diesel available (BYO additive such as IceBreaker)
Distance between supplies	50 kms (approx) back to Licola from Millers Hut
Equipment required	All equipment and supplies required to be self-sufficient for 3+ days / 2+ nights. Be prepared in case it snows. Basic tools, spares and recovery gear (vehicles to be fitted with rated recovery points but winches are not essential). Quality A/T tyres (min) or M/Ts recommended due to rough/rocky terrain.
Maps required	While not essential, quality maps covering the area include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rooftop's Dargo-Wonnangatta Adventure Map; and• Hema Maps' High Country Victoria.
Radio Channel CB/UHF	UHF Ch 12

Proficiency Training – Aberfeldy area, Trip run by Phil Griffith, Ashley Martin and John Partridge

Trip Report Written by: Alec Downs

Dates: 15th-16th March 2024

Trainers:

John – GQ Patrol

Phil – Ford Everest

Ashley – Ford Ranger

Trainees:

Sushan – Hilux

Adam – GU Patrol

Alec – MR Triton

Brett & Nicki – 300 Series Landcruiser

Steve & Amanda – Y62 Patrol

Details:

After an informative theory session on Tuesday March 12th we had a few days to look forward to the practical weekend. On Friday 15th, Sushan, John and Ashley made their way to Little O'Tooles campground, the smaller of the two O'Tooles campgrounds next to Donnelly's Creek, and near Meringtons where other training groups have camped in the past. Upgraded in 2023, Little O'Tooles has a new drop toilet, bollards, picnic tables, fire pits and lots of grass. It was Sushan's first time camping, believe it or not, but with a Darche swag and stretcher, he has clearly done his research.

Adam, Brett & Nicki, Steve & Amanda and I had an early-morning rendezvous with Phil at the BP Service Centre in Officer on Saturday. After a quick coffee and chat, we were on the road in earnest by 0715 to get to the tracks near Toombon and meet up with the others.

An uneventful hour-long drive down the Princes Highway saw us in Moe topping up with fuel, and a quick coffee break in the Aldi car park opposite the servo. Just as the middle-aisle-special hunters were queuing up for the store opening, we left and made our way to the Thomson Dam Wall, with a pit stop at Silvertop Picnic Area.

From there we made our way to Cherry Tree Spur Track where the practical training began in earnest. After airing down and doing a 'rig rundown' on a couple of the cars, each driver in turn was taken through the stall recovery process and how to drive through the brakes. Phil, John and Ashley were incredibly patient and reassuring, allowing each of us trainees to practice the manoeuvres in forward and reverse until we were confident.

From this practice spot we headed to camp, a straightforward jaunt through Junction Track to Donnelly's Creek Road where we crossed the Aberfeldy River (a very minor and easy crossing) and headed to Little O'Tooles. The Saturday crew set up camp and we all had lunch. No rest for John though, he had to backtrack to retrieve his misplaced UHF radio! We thought for a moment this massive monitor we spotted in camp had eaten it...

After lunch, it was time to hit the tracks. Flats Track, entered via a sharp right turn from Donnelly's Creek Road, was first up. At a steep section, I lost traction on an erosion mound and had to reverse through the brakes for another attempt. What an opportunity to put the morning's training to use in a real-life scenario! Ashley directed me on a better line to take and we were soon all rolling again.

After successfully picking our way through Flats Track, we had a cruisy run through Williamsons Spur Track in 2WD. We then turned down S Track which had some very steep sections and allowed us all a chance to practice driving through the brakes. For those of us with Hill Descent Control, we gave that a try out at certain spots too. We stopped to let a few dirt bike riders pass, which they did at a frankly alarming speed, jumping over obstacles we were picking our way through. From S Track we made our way back onto Donnelly's Creek Road to check out Goonan's Hut.

The current hut was rebuilt in 2015 following bushfires a couple of years before, and has a concrete floor, fireplace, water tank and a bench. There is a drop toilet as well as fire pits and picnic tables. After stretching our legs and taking a few photos, we made the return journey back to camp.

Led by John, we picked our way back up S Track to via Williamson Spur Track, where we took the opportunity to cut some firewood (or rather, John did, as he had a chainsaw). With some helpful advice from the trainers along the way, we navigated our way back down Flats Track and back to Little O'Tooles after what seemed like a very long day.

For the last training activity of the day, John lead an informative session on recovery gear, taking us through what he carried in his kit and why, what to look out for when stocking our own kits, and general pointers on how to carry out safe recoveries.

As dusk fell, the group gathered around the campfire and much chat was had about cars, camping and everything else under the sun. We all agreed it had been a challenging but rewarding day of training. Especially for those who had been nervous at the start of the day, there was a palpable sense of rising confidence, thanks to John, Phil and Ashley's patient training.

A long, adrenaline-filled day meant an early night, with everyone tucked up by a very respectable 11pm. We were lulled to sleep by the wolf-like howling of wild dogs, and a distant snore or two floating across the campground.

Sunday 17th March

Sunday morning saw Brett and Amanda first up (before 6am!). After a leisurely start, camp was packed up and we gathered around the picnic tables to go through our homework answers from the earlier theory session. Dodgy departure angle diagrams aside, everyone should be receiving a proficiency certificate! We were on the road again before 10am, eager to hit the tracks and put more of the training into practice.

Driving up Flats Track for the second time seemed (certainly to me at least) easier than the previous day, and everyone made it up without incident. As we got to the top of Flats Track, John split off to the bottom of a particularly steep section, while the rest of us parked up and walked down to observe. John then talked us through how to pick an optimal line and safely navigate up the really steep stuff. He then breezed up it in his Patrol.

From Flats Track we drove down One Speck Track via Williamsons Spur Track, picking our way carefully through some steep and rutted descents. Again we had the opportunity to practice driving through the brakes, picking the best lines, and navigating through the tricky parts as advised by John, Ashley and Phil over the radio. We passed a track that was ominously closed after someone had rolled their car and died sometime in the last few years.

After an early lunch beside the Aberfeldy River, everyone was excited to keep going, and you could tell that everyone was a lot more relaxed and confident than day one. Until, that is, we hit 'that bit' of Fulton's Creek Track. John's comment over the radio was something like "This will be interesting". Brett, next in line, said something not fit for print, and I'm pretty sure many of us uttered something similar as we approached the bottom of the ascent. The photos and videos don't do it justice (they never do), but staring up at this long, steep, deeply rutted portion of the track was intimidating, and certainly something I would never have attempted without this training. John, Ashley and Phil reassured us that we'd make it (although added that those of us with diff lockers would do well to engage them), and one by one, all cars did indeed make it up the hill in one piece and with no dramas. Full credit to Adam here, by the way, as this was his first 4WD trip ever. Talk about a baptism of fire! John filmed us all making the ascent (videos on the link above), and it's certainly something none of us trainees will forget in a hurry.

The convoy continued down Fultons with one or two short river crossings, eventually reaching Beardmores Track via Walhalla Road. A long descent with glimpses of the Thomson Dam spillway along the route eventually took us down to the Thomson River, and the last and longest of the water crossings. Gathered by the riverside, John quizzed us all on our water crossing knowledge, and we covered things like exit points, currents, momentum, water depth and air intakes as our cars cooled down. John filmed us as we made our way through the water one by one. With a couple of tight turns and nasty holes to avoid on the way out, everyone made it through with ease. The last obstacle!

All good things must come to an end, and we made our way back in 2WD to the Silvertop Picnic Area, where we aired up. Tyres back to road pressure and compressors stowed, we debriefed and said our farewells. Phil had commitments so sped off first, and John led the way to Moe, with members of the convoy peeling off along the way with a cheerio over the UHF radio.

I'm sure I speak for everyone in the group when I say that the proficiency training, theory and practical, was incredibly worthwhile. Everyone learned something new – whether it was about how our new cars performed off-road, how to apply basic 4WD techniques in the wild, or the safest approach to tricky situations. Many thanks to Ashley, Phil and John, who were consummate professionals: patient and encouraging, pushing us gently out of our comfort zones, and giving us the confidence to trust in our cars and ourselves.































We need your help on and off the tracks



**If you have some spare time
please consider joining the committee.
Your club needs you— do it for your club!**

Contact your Committee...

