

EASTER IN THE VIC HIGH COUNTRY

Day 1 and 2 (Murray and Jody)

The meeting place was the 'Pheasants Nest' truck-stop along the 'Hume Highway' at 8:30 am on Thursday 21 April 2011. There was an obvious sense of keenness as everyone arrived well before 8 o'clock and there was intermittent discussion over the first big decision of the trip 'where to have breakfast'. The participants of the trip were:

Murray and Jody	-	76 Series Landcruiser
Scott and Wendy	-	GQ Patrol
Wayne and Kirstein	-	GQ Patrol
Stuart and Alley	-	79 Series Landcruiser
Richard	-	GU Patrol
Mark	-	Hilux
Kevin	-	GU Patrol

A steady drive down the Hume Highway ensued (with the exception of Kevin who would meet us later that day) until we reached Gundagai where we took the more scenic route through Tumut, Batlow, Tumbarrumba and finally to our first night destination at the very picturesque Nariel Creek just south of Corryong. Kevin joined us at Corryong and now our convoy was complete.

First day mechanical difficulties – One 'Red' GQ Patrol with a mechanical noise coming from the LHS rear wheel.



The next day began with a very easy drive along 'Nariel Gap' track which posed very few difficulties, other than some navigational challenges, but at least it was a gravel road. We eventually reached the turn-off to Mount Pinnibar and at last an opportunity to engage 4wd, there was a nice steady climb up to the Mount Pinnibar Trig which was easily negotiated by all. The look-out was well worth the trip but it was rather cool bordering on 'bloody cold'. Wendy and Stu had the right idea and it was obvious that fashion and practicality were achievable.



We left the trig and deviated off the Mount Pinnibar Track and proceeded along the more interesting Mount Gibbo track. Mount Pinnibar is 1,770 metres and Mount Gibbo is at 1,580 metres so a few decent inclines and declines in damp conditions tempted to make the track challenging but unfortunately this was not the case, still an excellent track and well recommended for anyone venturing that way. A stop at the Mount Anderson lookout provided and nice, but yet another cold, place for lunch.



We continued along until we reached Buenba Road where we had a nice easy drive to Buenba Flat camping ground.

Saturday 23rd April

Departed Buenba Flat at 9.45 am (6am was -2 degrees) the ice was still melting as we drove out of the open plains towards Conways Hut. We passed lots of cars; this was the most traffic we would see for our trip.

As we headed up from the plains the colour of the trees changed & I have never seen the gum leaves look as red. We made our way to McCartney's Track the road was at a traffic jam with 4WDs as we headed down to Lime Stone Creek. We had morning tea at Poplars Camping ground by the creek. What a pretty crystal clear creek with flowing water.

We headed back to Limestone Creek Track. Once again lots of traffic. Stu had to admire another Toyota. It was like 2 dogs sniffing each other! We then headed for Native Cat Track, stopped along the way for lunch & fire wood. Good steady drive. Stopped for photos at Brumbies Rock, lookout along the Nunning Rd.



Arrived at Moscow villa at about 4.30pm to set up for camp & dinner as I was cooking curry chicken & rice for everybody with the help of the girls. 2 camp ovens later we all ate and sat by the fire, Stu with his funny hat. Lots of goodies passed around the fire for supper then off to bed.

By Wendy Yee-Dempster

Left campsite and the rodent infested Toyota kitchen t 9:33 Heading towards Harrison's cut

Steep Matheson's track

Photo shoot at the Dargo toilet

Had lunch and a beer at the Dargo hotel

Headed down steep O'Gradys creek road... Passing 5 cars enroute

Lunch stop at Wollangatta River

Started on the billygoat 244pm great track with some very steep slopes which required 1st gear low Met Toyota club many times, oh how deep is the water. Overnight at horse yard flats, meet some day trippers at a great campsite with firewood Viewed pinnacles,

Wayne

Day 9 (Murray and Jody)

Today being the second last day of the trip should have been like any other day, some good 4wding, some laughs, good company and a little bit of the unexpected. Well as it turned out we would not be disappointed.

We started to pack up on a rather cool and foggy morning, Poppet having repaired his vehicle the night before (well he assisted Stuart) wanted to break camp early and take a run into Dargo for some much needed fuel (having to replace the 30 litres left on the track by his leaking fuel tank), Richard and Mark decided they would go along for the drive and after some discussion we agreed to meet later in the day along the Dargo river at the bottom of the Conway Track. Directions were easy, leave the camp and turn right, travel about 1km until you get to the intersection and turn left, travel 400 metres and turn left onto the main track into Dargo. Having being equipped with a map, track directions from the book and a compass the three amigos left camp with all the confidence of the Titanic venturing off into the wilderness at 8:00 am. The remainder of us (Murray and Jody, Scotty and Wendy, Stuart and Alley) took our time and left camp an hour later at 9:00 am.

After the second group had travelled about 2 km's, we could hear the first group on the UHF having some mild disagreement about the direction in which they were travelling. One wanted to go in a southerly direction, one wanted to follow the map and the other was playing piggy in the middle.

Our comment of 'wouldn't it be funny if we ran into these guys just up here' turned out to be very funny indeed. Out of the fog came Wayne and 'Crusty' in the 'red' GQ Patrol followed by Mark's Hilux and Richard's Patrol, the funny part was not the fact that they had taken an hour to travel the 2km's that took us a 5 minutes, but rather they tried to sneak past so we would not see them. Nice try!!! Apparently our laughter and general banter was not welcomed by the first group, so they changed channel, luckily the UHF's have a 'scan' function so we did not miss out on any of the fun.

The first group having got back on track climbed out of the Wonnangatta Valley along 'Wombat Range' and travelled along the ridge of Cynthia Range and eventually down into Eaglevale camping area and onto Dargo. The second group retraced our steps and climbed up out of the Wonnangatta Valley via Wonnangatta and Riley's Tracks through the fog to a spectacular view over the ranges with the fog lying in the valleys below. After a short break the second group followed the first up Wombat range (a few hours in arrears) and across Cynthia Range and headed for the meeting point. As luck would have it both parties met at the river within five minutes of each other.

After a cheerful reunion we all headed to our camp site along the river at 'Black Snake Camp ground'.

Day 9 Mechanical Difficulties - One 'Red' GQ (too many to list now)



Last Day in the High Country

It's 0600, I can hear Jody & Murray and Wayne & Krusty pulling out onto the road and driving off to Dargo and then the land.

0800 and it's our turn, brekkie and pack up complete, the remaining four cars are leaving as well. But we have a mission! Blue Rag on the way out! We lead out followed by Richard in his Patrol, Mark and the Hilux with Stu and Ally in the V8 Toyota Ute.

Back thru Dargo, Rich and Mark are applying for citizenship and frequent flyer points as this is their third visit in as many days. Drifting thru the valleys looking down on the fog filled lowlands, we make our way up the climb onto the Dargo High Plains Road. Fantastic scenery still draws us to stop and take yet another photo of the spectacular views. No one's complaining about stopping as we are all enjoying the moment.

We're making good time, and passing only a few other vehicles. The occasional hunting ute parked on the side of the road, one already has a head and wide rack that Bambi has donated to his shed wall. I've overshot the Blue Rag turn off, we pull into the Mount Freezeout lookout for a quick munchies and back to the Blue rag turn off. This starts out usual fight as to who's turn is it to drive! Always fun!!

So Wendy's now driving up to the Trig point. It takes a little longer than we expected. The track is not difficult but has a few rough and technical bits, including the steepest 30m of track I've been up so far! Once at the top, we all Kodak the hell out of it, decide that the trip down to the river is for another day (bloody good reason to return I think).



With the cameras smoking hot, the 360 degree view captured in full, obligatory group shot taken, we set off, sadly realising the next few klms are the last of the dirt!

We break out of the High Plains Road onto the Bitumen just short of Hotham, and with a bit of juggling due to a dead compressor, we manage to pump up 16 tyres to road pressure with two compressors, fix a leaking turbo inlet pipe, (thanks Ally) file some nails and hit the road. This time enlightened by a car driving down the mountain bellowing smoke out of the back corners from the still applied hand brake!!!

Well it's all downhill from here, so they say bitumen all the way, next stop, The Land. The scenic drive thru Harrietville and the cameras were going off like frogs in socks at the colourful autumn trees. Smoko at the Bright pie shop and away again via Wangaratta and onto the freeway.

The next stop is Albury where we are split up to find fuel, some tool tried to rip Wendy off at the pumps, sticking her with his much larger fuel bill. He was too slow getting away and had to return and pay up! Off again and constant reminders of Richards one headlight and his fondness for Dargo kept us all entertained

Well, remember Team Wayne and the Robins car leaving early? Who do we hear over the radio? Wayne! He's broke big-time and Mr Spares has come to his rescue, rebuilding a diff and axle on the side of the road at Gundagai. The lengths Chris will go to, to come on a trip!

So, approaching 10pm and we're leaving Goulburn for the land with Team Wayne and Mr Spares in tow. The Highlight is Little Madison Giggling at the bumps on the land, she's having a ball! (Should be asleep!) We all set up camp and make our way up to the shed and join what's left of the Canning Stock Route Briefing group and re-unite with Jody and Murray.

A few Ports and apart from the drive home, it's all over red rover! Until next time!!

Thankyou everyone for a great trip, fireside conversation, entertainment, tech support, MTA best guesses, it really was about quality not quantity, or was it?

The highlights for this trip besides the fantastic views were; great campsites (mostly), some pretty terrific meals, Wayne settling the dust on the Zeka Spur Decent with unleaded! A Dawn Service to remember on a pretty special ANZAC Day with the appropriate festivities.

Would we do it again? When are we leaving.....?

Scotto