



Registered No. A0016002M

CFA 4WD Club MINUTES of Meeting

19th June 2003

Held at Scoresby Fire Station

TRIP REPORT

CFA 4WD Club

Circumnavigation of Lake Eildon Queens Birthday Long Weekend, 7th- 9th June 2003

Leader: Daven Vassallo, Nissan Patrol
Allan Layton, Defender Xtreme
Andy Kass, 60 series Cruiser, and Gail

Friday nite Daven travelled up from Melbourne, and slept on Allan's lounge room floor at Thornton.

Saturday.

Daven and Allan travelled to the Eildon township, and started the circumnavigation from the temporary launching ramp at the dam wall.

They travelled along the fire access track past East's lookout and over Karralika Heights into Taylor Bay. They then headed out onto the bitumen, heading north, past the communications towers and fire tower at Devils River, and into the Fraser National Park.

After viewing the old Coller homestead ruins, they attempted to travel along the lakebed towards Pt Mead, however the Defender sunk in soft ground. Daven snatched it out. Not a good start to the trip. One hour in, and the 1st casualty. A stuck Landrover. How ignominious. [Actually, what happened was that Daven did a quick u-turn back towards Allan, and was winding down his window and yelling a message. As Allan drew level, he tried to wind down his window, and came to a halt to hear the message. The message? "Don't stop there, it's very soft". Too late. Stuck.]



Whoops. What happened here ?

Back out onto Skyline road, admiring the views (?) – surrounded by cloud. Turned onto Sonnberg drive. Stopped at the cairn overlooking the junction of the Delatite arm with the Brankeet arm. Views along the Delatite showed that the lake only extended up the arm a few kms, then reverted to the riverbed. (The lake was only about 8% of capacity at the time of the trip.) Looking over into Peppin Point, was even worse. The lake didn't even make it past Woolshed Island.

Past Peppin Point, and drive onto an old road along the lake bed, at Kennedy Point (toilet block and launching ramp). Drive upstream, alongside Brankeet creek, pass below the end of the launching ramps, then drive under both the road and the (disused) rail bridges at Bonnie Doon. Cross the stream and pass under the bridges again, going downstream this time. Drive out of LakeBed near the holiday houses along Hutchinsons rd. Allan slips on grass underlaid with soft yellow mud/ clay. Sinks again. Daven snatches, again. [The 31" 'All-terrains' on the Landy are proving no match for the wider and taller 33" 'Mud-terrains' on the Nissan.]

Lunch was taken at Daven's holiday house. Climb steep hill behind the house (on foot). Allan not happy. Walking ! But beautiful views. Towards the Bonnie Doon township and the bridges, and towards Peppin Point.

Back into the cars. Visit the launching ramps (high and dry) in Mrs Bon bay (opposite and downstream of Peppin Point).

Back out to the highway now. Towards Mansfield, following the blacktop until we hit the Burns Inlet turnoff (the Howes creek road).

June 2003

~ 3 of 10 ~

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We passed many dry inlets, and streambeds, eventually turning down Ross road. We entered the lakebed on the dry upper reaches of the Delatite Arm, at the intersection with Howes creek. View old tank stand and ruins of the settlement, and the remnants of the old (substantial) bridge – concrete piers, wooden stringers.



Remains of the Howe's creek settlement.



Bridge over Delatite River near Howe's ck.

The ford downstream of the ruins had difficult approaches on both sides (especially after the rain of the past week), and with the flow in the stream we give it a miss. Daven finds an easier crossing upstream. Good rocky base. Wider, hence shallow. Easy approach and departure. Easy going.

We drive westwards along LakeBed roughly parallel to Walshes road, travelling downstream. Another bridge (just upstream of the junction of the Burnt creek with the Delatite). Less substantial this time, timber piers, longer spans. We cross to the northern bank (on foot) and inspect old cattle yards. Interesting gateposts etc. An old house, bricked well, and collapsed windmill are nearby.

Further down along the southern bank, we find the ruins of a substantial house (concrete masonry block footings, bitumen dampcourse, originally of brick construction). Probably a major homestead. Old yards, sheep dip and hut nearby. Slightly further away, larger yards, probable shearing shed, and older timber house. Perhaps the original homestead? Two bricked wells. [Note, all of these buildings are generally 'flattened' to ground level, with only fence posts and other substantial timbers eg. shed posts, still standing.]

Lots of fences, roads, culverts etc. Although driving along the lakebed we were actually following a well-formed and gravelled road (some/ most of the time).

Out of the lake. It's getting latish. We're somewhere down around the Parkers point camping areas in the Delatite arm reserve, where camping is permitted, and pit dunnies are provided. Need to look for a camp. The camping areas all along this pine plantation area are pretty busy, tents, trailers, buses, campervans, and heaps of motor bikes.

Round a corner. Shit. Big blue and white bus, labelled '05' etc. Shit. It's only a banner strung between 2 trees. Nearly lifesize though (the banner was about 3 metres high!). The booze bus looked real enough!

Camp at Highbett's campground. Rain started just as we got a tarp and the tent up. Daven got wet putting up the 2nd tarp. Allan helped whilst remaining under cover!

After dinner, Daven takes the Nissan (and Allan) for a night-drive onto Highbett Ridge Track to gain some elevation and mobile phone reception. Arranges for Andy and Gail to meet us Sunday morning between 0930 and 1000. Tries to drive to the top of the range to turn around. Gets stuck (nice stall stop) in muddy conditions. Backs down, with Allan giving instructions whilst on foot with torch. Then to bed.

Note: Daven says today was easy, Sunday will be more difficult and Monday more so again. Bugger says Allan, already been snatched twice! Not good for Landy's reputation!

Sunday.

Slow start. Expecting Andy and Gail after 0930, so no panic. Go back to take photo of booze bus banner (the banner had sagged a bit overnight, but still looked impressive).



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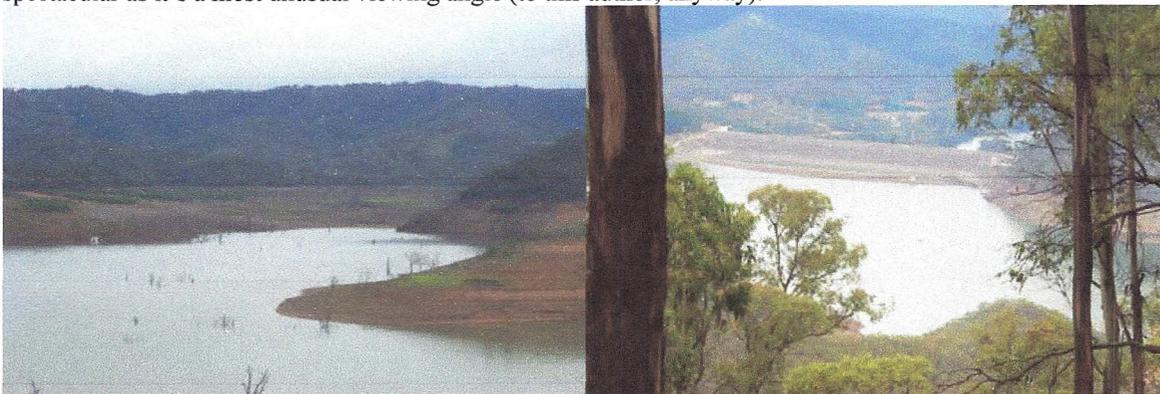
They're everywhere. Even where you might least expect them.

Whilst waiting, we let our tyres down a fair bit. As did Andy when he joined us around 1000hrs. Heard him first on the UHF cb, then saw him charging down the (gravel) road with head and driving lights flashing to get our attention. It worked.

And off we went. Good gravel road, up over the Maintongoon saddle, down past the North and South Maintongoon camping areas. A bit of a try to get up the old (horribly disused) track but again Allan's tyres let the side down. Andy had no trouble with his Cooper muddies, as did Daven, but the AT's (even at reduced pressure) had no grip at all on the grassed over, clayey track. Anyway, back out to Stillman's road (which we were going to join onto anyway), and up over Woolshed saddle, and eventually around to Stillman's point. Which is directly opposite the inlet to Fraser National Park (Coller bay) – the site of yesterday's bogging for Allan.

Where we lunched. Sangas for Daven and Allan. But Andy really turned it on for Gail, out with the frying pan, and soon they had sausages and tomato sauce in fresh, long buns.

A little bit of reverse tracking, and onto Stillman's track. Up the hills no trouble, even for the Landy, although the wet conditions did have it scrambling for traction quite a bit on the first steep pinch. The track then runs along the top of the ridge for quite some distance. This ridge is the one that can be seen from the top of the dam wall at Eildon, over the water, to the north of the lake. From the ridgetop track the view of the wall, and into the Eildon Boat club, and the Boat Harbour, is quite spectacular as it's a most unusual viewing angle (to this author, anyway).



Coller bay (Fraser National Park)

Eildon dam (viewed from Stillman's track)

Eventually we joined onto the Hightett ridge track. Daven got the good goss from some motorcyclists who told us that Allens track down to Goughs bay was "extremely challenging" (for motorbikes that is!) with some very big whoop-de-doo's "big enough to get a 4x4 stuck on". Discretion. And it's starting to get a little late in the afternoon. OK. Back down one of the fire access tracks onto Walshes road and out and around. Good theory.

Down firebreak track 2B we went. Or rather Daven went. Fairly steep. But about 6" deep in thick gooey yellow clay. Down goes Allan. Shit. Allan's still going down. Shit. Stall-stop doesn't quite achieve anything until he buries it in a small whoop-de-doo. If anything the track ahead looks worse. Radio. Hmm. Nothing for it. Starts and edges over. Drives and steers for a bit, then another stall-stop. Nothing. Left foot remains on floor. No clutch. Try brakes, lock-up. Let off. Still steering, missing



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trees, rocks, just. Eventually things slow down marginally, and slide sideways into, and along, a bit of a graded up edge to the track. Keystart whilst still sliding downwards and gingerly drive the rest of the way down. About 200 metres of *****.

If you don't believe me, ask Andy. He followed me down the now well chewed-up track, and still isn't sure how he didn't clean up the rear right hand quarter on a tree near the bottom !

Out onto the main road and to Piries, where we stopped for a bit of a talk. Guess what the topic was ? We can all laugh about it now.

Follow the blacktop to Macs Cove. At Macs Cove (on the Howqua inlet) Daven tried to climb a hill, and almost did ! But didn't. Again, nice stallstop, reverse keystart and down safely. Hmm he said, "I went up there a few months ago" ! Oh well. We have a look at the ford through the Howqua river on the old road alignment. Much worse than the one we didn't attempt back at Howes creek yesterday. 1. The Howqua is flowing much more than the Delatite was (read: swifter, deeper); 2. Both approaches are just as muddy but steeper and higher. Again, discretion. Back out to the road and around. We re-entered the lakebed through the little town of Howqua and proceeded downstream, below the launching ramp at the caravan park, past the high and dry fuel barge, through a couple of wet holes and little creeks, and finished up at the junction of the Delatite and Goulburn rivers. Although the recent rains were making our trip 'interesting', it was real good to see meaningful flow in the rivers for a change. At Peachey's we were able to see the old shearing shed, homestead site, collapsed bridge, and fixed crane and hand winches (presumably for loading boats with bales of wool).

It was also interesting to see 2 jet-skis come upstream from the Goughs bay direction, on the Goulburn River to the junction.



Peachey's woolshed

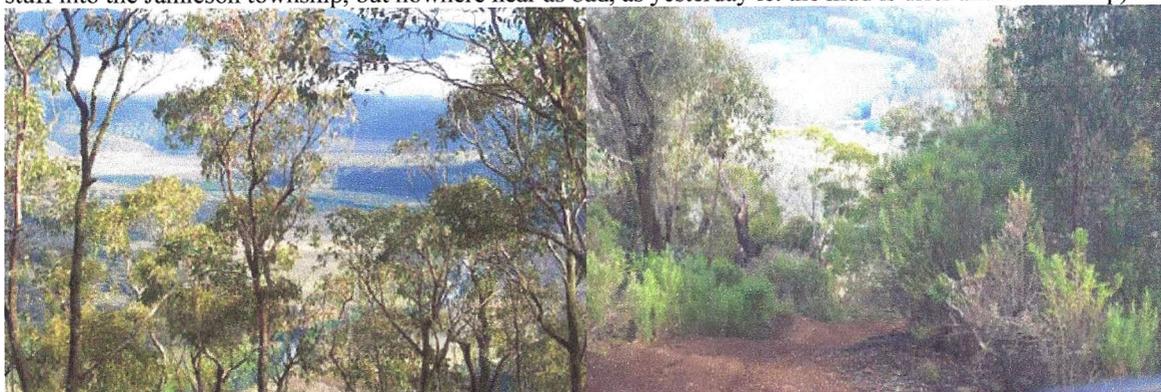
Hand winches

Jet-Skis

Starting to get late. Back to the caravan park and book in for a camping site. No one else in the camping area, so we had the smallish facilities block just to ourselves (nice hot shower). Andy and Gail stayed for a bbq and then headed back to Melbourne (by which time it was nice and dark). The park turned on a bonfire for the residents (their substantial dry, rubbish heap) complete with a few fireworks. Bed.

Monday.

Got mobile about 0900. Pretty good effort. Another blacktop transit stage down to Jamieson. No, says Daven, why don't we go over the top of the range. Yep. Up Stony ck track and onto Mitchells track. Fantastic views into the very dry Paradise Point area, and looking ahead to the Jamieson-Eildon road bridge over the Goulburn river. Steep, muddy (especially the downhill stuff into the Jamieson township, but nowhere near as bad, as yesterday ie. the mud is drier and not as deep).



A very dry Paradise Point (from Mitchells track). Bridge in centre background, track in foreground.

Vehicle fuel tanks were topped up at Jamieson (warning: vehicle LPG is NOT available at Jamieson, only petrol & diesel). Then down and across the Goulburn onto the Eildon road, for only a short distance. Turning right at the Jamieson Brewery (the old Lakeside Hotel/ Motel) into the Paradise Point area. After a bit of re-reading of the 1:25,000 topo map we established where we wanted to be, and found the right track. Not bad as far as tracks go, compared to what we've seen so far anyway. But



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then the track splits off. The original track goes straight up over a hilltop, and the right hand track possibly takes a gentler route around the contours. Daven goes straight up. Rutted. Ledges to climb. Stall-stops after a bit of stationary wheel spinning. Car is a bit sideways, and a big tree is lined up right behind him. Fortunately there is a large tree directly ahead, on top of the hill, and within the length of the winch rope (ie. about 30 or so metres). Allan walks up to help. Daven winches out. Allan walks down to his car and takes the chicken track. Also deeply rutted in one or two places, but being much less steep am able to negotiate it OK. Eventually we pop back out on the bitumen road to Eildon (a bit below Williams lookout).

It's then around to Bald Hill gap, and onto Lake track. Well traversed by motorcycles, it was a bit cut-up in places, but generally was pretty good. One big whoop-de-doo was very wet and muddy on the outward side, and was placed at the start of a short but moderately steep hill. Without the chance to get any momentum working, at slow speed the ATs on the Landy were scrambling for traction. Again. Fantastic views – Big River to the west, Goulburn River and Howqua rivers to the east. Can easily see Peachie's and the Howqua caravan park. The original Lake track ended on a hilltop, but was extended down to the water's edge many years ago. Allan recollects seeing this from the water (when there was water), when he used to camp around the lake. Steep. Rutted. Very challenging. One way down, and same way out. Allan chickens out. Calls Daven on UHF "I'm leaving the Landy here, I'll walk down and get in with you". By the time he gets camera etc, Daven has REVERSED up the hill to pick me up ! (OK. He wasn't that far down, nor was he on the worst bit, but still: pretty good effort.)

Fantastic views of a very dry Goughs bay. [The 'end' of the lake was about midway between the Big River junction and Goughs bay.] Back up the track. Give it to it Daven. Bounce. Shake. Bang. And away we went. Straight up.

Lunch, and retrieve the Landy. Back out to the bitumen. Another long transit stage ahead of us. No shortcuts in there. Eventually we've crossed over the Big River, the Taponga River, and driven past the site of the old Torbreck station. Right onto Taylors creek track. When Daven reconnoitred this track a week before, he found it closed by a very large tree. As it's a major track we took a punt that it would have been cleared by now (as the alternatives are a fair bit longer). It was open. Daven also found that a number of tracks had also had a bulldozer over them in recent weeks, and with the rain were very muddy. He'd had to winch himself out of one spot. Allan is really looking forward to this !

Onto Wombat track. Uphill. Yep. Cut up. Muddy. Wet. after a few uphill which had the Landy working hard, we faced our first downhill. There are five of these, and we have to come out the way we go in ! No says Allan. Landy, you're staying here. Daven collects Allan again (although this time he got stuck in the mud trying to back up the hill). Of we go. Onto Rhonda track, which is no better. Great aerial view of the old Big River bridge, standing proud, high and dry.

Allan's map showed Rhonda track going around in a loop and joining Webb track, which then went back onto Wombat track. Not so. The section of these tracks around the contour is actually the original Eildon-Jamieson road via the old Big River bridge. But a bridge over a gully has collapsed many moons ago, and the gully is impassable to all but motorbikes. We should have guessed that it was closed. The track was fairly well overgrown. Back out the way we came in.

Up the 1st hill. Well done. Plenty of momentum. Lo 3rd in the Nissan, even the MTs and the limited slip diff are all working hard. Up the 2nd one. Yes ! Now for the 3rd one. "This is where I winched last week" says Daven. Give it to it. YESSSSS !!! The others are relatively easy compared to that mother. We find the Landy and make our way out onto Taylors creek track again.

We cross the ford through Jerusalem creek and follow the gravel road around past the Darlingford Boat club, the public launching ramp, and rejoin the bitumen to take us toward Eildon. Up onto the wall, and down to the temporary boat launching area. Where we started from, three days and 350kms ago !

A great trip. In terms of difficulty, very challenging, given the conditions. Good tyres and traction aids (LSD, locking diffs, etc) essential. In the dry it would have been totally different and should be navigable by ATs. Although a few rutted areas might cause a bit of drama, it would still be achievable by most club members (smaller vehicles excepted – good clearance and low range essential).

Thanks to Daven for preparing the trip, and leading. And thanks for the rides. I enjoyed being a passenger for a change.

Trip report by A Layton. 16 June 03.