

# Trip Reports:

## Mudgegonga Fire Recovery Weekend

*David Blore, Graham & Sue Abotomey, Craig and Lauren Cheetham, Alan Davis, Terry Dillon Bruce Gooday, Peter Hall, Noel, Irene and Rachel Ham, Rob Holden, Stan Williams  
4WD NSW & ACT: Roger and Jill Sheath and Bruce*

The first Wangaratta 4WD Club Fire Recovery Weekend at Mudgegonga was a resounding success, with three landowners assisted by the removal of some 4.3 km of fire-damaged fencing. Estimates of the total length of fencing damaged in the north-east by the February 09 fires vary from 800km to 8000 km, but regardless of which is correct, at a cost of \$5000/km approximately (replacement only), the farmers of the area face a daunting challenge. Experienced fencers also suggest that the costs associated with removal of damaged fencing is actually greater than the cost of renewal (excluding materials), so the work we are undertaking is very valuable. Beyond this is the positive impact of just being there and helping, which is extremely important as many are trying to deal with huge issues, and isolation can be a significant factor,

Over the weekend we had some 20 individuals including Club members and family, (some of whom were there for both days, some for one only), three guests of the Club who were associated with the landowners, and we were particularly pleased to welcome three representatives of the NSW 4WD Association who had come down for an initial recce trip. The turnout was fantastic and was commented on by the owners who were blown away by the achievements: 4.3 km of fence removed and loaded for disposal as noted earlier. We learnt heaps about the small improvements to our techniques including those for handling barbed wire which can make a big difference in avoiding too many scratches! We were also very lucky to have Craig's small tractor on Saturday, and Rob Holden's Dingo for the weekend; Graham and Sue also had a JD Gator there which was very valuable. The Dingo particularly seemed initially like a boy on a man's errand, but convinced everyone who saw it operating that it was a true man-sized machine and highly productive!



While we were there we heard about other volunteer groups who were working in the area, ranging from people from the Uniting Church in the MIA who had come down for up to six months to assist, to a young staff member from DPI who had come down on his own bat on Saturday to work with the fire-affected families. The clear message was that we are a small part of a huge community upswelling of support for our friends in the fire-affected areas of Victoria.

Future Fire Recovery weekends have been planned with other clubs, including Swan Hill and Kerang next weekend, and Albury-Wodonga at the end of March; NSW are also planning a big push at Easter. It is not expected that our members attend each of these weekends, but if members wish to participate (as many have indicated) they should contact David Blore.

A great effort everyone!



goes. Surprise, surprise, after a little bit of scrabbling and driving at the lowest engine revs as possible without stalling, the Ute climbed to the top. Now I can go home without pumping up my tyres. Mike then asked if I would do it again with a passenger, so round we went again without hick up. What most of the fellow instructors were interested in were the Gas/Diesel set up and the big exhaust.

More theory followed so about 1515 hrs Jim and I made our apologies and retreated to the Hume Hwy again

I know Jim used to word "hoon" on one occasion but I'm sure it was not pointed at me so no fines for the day

Stan

## Edi Cutting Family Weekend

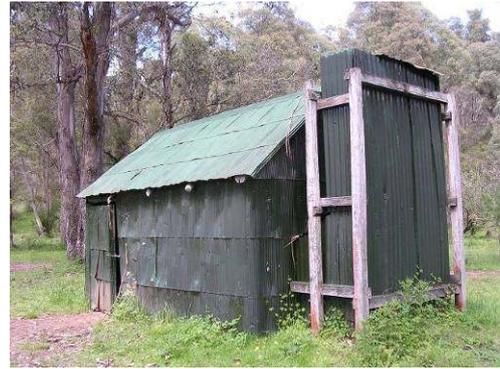
*A trip report was not available for this weekend, so Robbo offered to put something together for me – thanks Robbo for doing this at short notice.*

The camp at Edi cutting was interesting although the caravan club didn't come out on the night drive. Rob Holden drove my truck to the Top Crossing hut at quite a rapid rate and the other three trucks did manage to keep up even though Ron was in the middle of the convoy and Craig was tail end Charlie.

Lots of roos about and some close encounters with those and bunnies (one bunny did commit suicide at one point although we risked our lives to try and avoid the poor little darling).

There were some campers at the hut and we stopped for a brief few moments before I lead the drivers back. The creeks were low and at the second creek we played a practical joke on Ron and became tail end Charlie. Then Craig decides to cross sandy creek and climb the track on the other side for an alternative route back to camp. Good drive enjoyed the company.

Cheers Robbo



## Fire Recovery Update

(provided by David early April)

So far, two weekend workparties by the Wang 4WD Club with assistance on one from the representatives of the NSW 4WD Association and assistance on the other from the Swan Hill 4WD Club have removed about 10 km of fire-damaged fencing on three properties in the Mudgegonga area. This is a great effort but as we all appreciate the task of fire recovery, even in this relatively small fire-affected area of the state, is still enormous.

We have been working very closely with the Alpine Shire Volunteer Coordinator in undertaking our workparties and have developed a strong relationship with Hugh Forrest who is carrying out this role although living and farming in the fire-affected area himself.

We have also registered with 4WDVic for towing of donated caravans into the fire-affected areas; the first tow (by myself) is happening this Friday from the staging area at Seymour to the recipient in Reedy Creek.

We have been in contact with several other clubs (Albury Wodonga and GV) who are also considering becoming involved in the fire recovery work, but haven't committed to dates as yet. However, the good news is that the NSW Association will definitely be coming down over Easter with possibly up to 25 vehicles, so this will make a big impact on a number of properties in the area.

**Our Next Steps:**

**Weekend 4/5 April:**

A one-day workparty is planned for this weekend to maintain the momentum, continue our good work and also assist in planning for Easter with the Shire Coordinator. Again, volunteers are being sought, and it would be good to get some fresh blood as well as the regular candidates of the past workparties.

*Ed. This was not held due to low numbers. David Blore went up to plan the Easter activities with Alpine Shire Co-ordinator, Hugh Forrest*

**Easter:**

We are asking for a few volunteers to work with our NSW colleagues over Easter on Friday and/or Saturday for work. Sunday is a day trip for the NSW participants (Wang members are also welcome) which Ron Beurs will lead with other members as necessary.

If you are able to contribute a day to one or both of these workparties, please let me know ASAP so I can plan accordingly. It would be great to see a continuing strong representation of Wangaratta 4WD Club in this highly important work.

*Ed. This was a great success. See next newsletter for full report.*

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0407885410 or [david.blore@gmail.com](mailto:david.blore@gmail.com)"

**Anzac weekend** is now also going to be a big exercise as the ACT Association could also have up to 40 people coming down. David has a prior booking for that weekend so will not be available available. Noel will be attempting to take over from David for this weekend and certainly has big shoes to try to fill!

We will be following a similar process as for Easter, with members from Wangaratta 4x4 Club leading workgroups.

We will need to have at least 4 members to lead these workgroups. As some of our regulars will not be able to make it on this weekend, if you have been considering giving a hand, this is the time to put it up.



*Great view of a whirly wind running up the valley during our lunch break.*



**THANKYOU to Rob and Liz of HIP Pocket Workwear and Safety for their very generous donation of safety vests, safety glasses, gloves and hats for use on our fires recovery weekends.**

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