

Training Weekend

Attendees: Stan and Bethne Williams, Terry Dillon, Allan and Vicki Davis, Irene and Noel Ham, Rob and Louise Holden, David and Kay Blore, David and Doreen Clarke, Tom Barnard, Barry Richardson, Bruce Gooday, Kristen, Craig and Lauren Cheetham, Frank Stephens, Jim Bramich.

Friday

Some keen members arrived early and had the fire going by the time I arrived with caravan, hand outs training aids and a small load of fire wood. First job was to put the club banner up so all could identify the turn off.

Saturday by 0930 most had arrived ready for the training. A round robin was set up to keep things moving so trainees were not waiting for presentations to be set up. Training was comprehensive and covered negotiating different terrains such as steep hills and river crossings, tyres and the importance of tyre pressures, understanding and using recovery gear, particularly the club's tirror hand winch, (which is a good reason to purchase a vehicle mounted powered winch).



All dressed up for the camp



Craig demonstrating Tirror

We ran a little over time on the theory as many stories came out along with experiences shared. Saturday arvo trainees were able to finally get behind the wheel and have a play. First it was how to negotiate water crossings. Some members found this so much fun they had several goes. Tom even took the opportunity to drive an instructor's vehicle showing others how to drive upstream over large rocks.

By the time we had finished the theory phase of the training it was mid afternoon. Some people were getting a little tired after being on their feet all day. Some elected to return to camp, gather firewood and settle in for the night. Others headed up towards Gunn track for a drive returning to camp about dark time. Thanks for the extra wood guys.

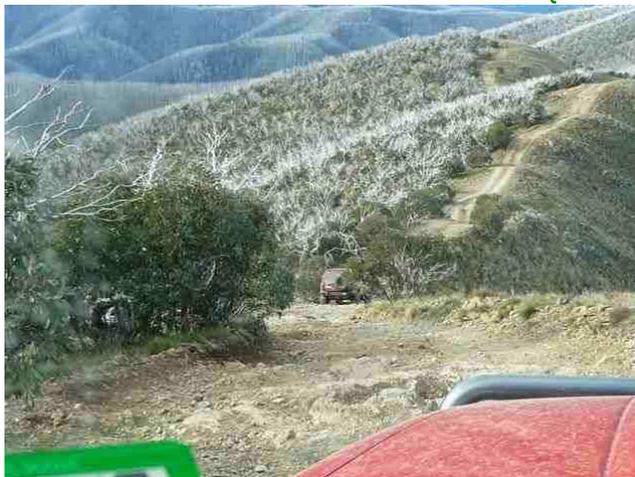
Sunday was scheduled to be practical training and confirmation. Scotchman's track was selected mainly because it has most obstacles required to show and demonstrate the skills being presented. Reasonable ascents and descents are available on this track, and it's not so steep as to scare anyone but still instill confidence. Instructors moved from car to car providing opportunities to explain different vehicle control techniques to as many trainees as possible. There are some stories to tell here but I'll let the drivers tell their own stories around a camp fire. Most people headed for home after lunch on Sunday but a few diehards stayed for Monday's drive.



Tyre pressure demo

Monday was declared Stan's day, mostly because being a passenger all weekend in other people's cars does not allow for much driving and I promised something a little more challenging to anyone who wanted to be there. It was so cold on Sunday night watch batteries failed to produce enough current to move the time pieces. Allan was up and ready on time while others slept in thinking it was still 0630 when it was actually 0830.

After Allan did the rounds and got us out of bed we headed off at about 0930. Allan riding shotgun with Stan, Vicky still had memories of following Stan up Butcher Country Track a few weeks earlier and was not about to repeat the experience. We headed towards, Clear Creek track, past Gunn track and came out on the black stuff at the Hotham ticket office. Over the top and along the Dargo High Plains Road and turned off towards Mayfords. We discovered Mayfords closed from 1 May as this track is near impossible when wet.



Not to be disappointed we negotiated our way up to the top of Blue Rag where we discovered some Morons had pulled over the trig point and damaged it beyond repair. I wondered if it was the same fools that stole our new club banner in the early hours of Sunday morning.

We headed past Blue Rag and down to the Wonangarra River, a place only Allan had been some 400 years earlier. It took 40 minutes to reach the river, much in low gear, with rocks, clay, minor ruts, and an excellent drive. The river was flowing clean and fast. Tom negotiated his way across in his trusty red Nissan although it's not looking so clean at this point in time. Tom found a couple of small camp sites on the other side. If any one wants a quiet weekend fishing this is the place, but be warned if it rains you may not get out by vehicle and I suspect the river could rise very quickly. Tom lead the way out and back to Hotham, it took Stan and Allan 40 minutes to drive out (suspect Tom was waiting at the top for some time). We returned to camp just on dark. Vicky had a cuppa waiting for us as we packed up. Dinner in Myrtleford at the greasiest fish and chip shop I have ever entered and back home by about 2030hrs.

Thanks to all for coming and a special thanks from the club instructors, Jim and Stan, to the helpers, Barry, Craig and Noel.

Written by Stan & authorised by Bethne

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