

Mt Sunday and Beyond

19th- 21st March

Participants: Noel and Irene Ham, Alan and Vicki Davis, Frank and Henry Stephens, Jim, Maxwell and Edward Bramich, Stan and Bethne Williams, Rob Holden

Due to the distance involved, *Sheepyard Flat* was the designated assembly point for an early start on Saturday morning. Alan and Vicky headed up early on Friday and secured a good spot for us to camp overnight. They were no doubt somewhat bemused as our crew struggled in at various points during that evening and following morning. We were thankful for the fire that was ready for us on arrival, with the dry wood they brought from home being well used on both evenings.

Our slumbers were interrupted abruptly at some ridiculous hour of the morning by the roar of a vehicle fitted with brand new mud tyres pulling up in the middle of camp, and the annoyingly cheerful (read: raucous) 'good morning' from Stan heralding the arrival of the William's!

At around 8.30am, once the Bramich family arrived we headed along *Howqua Hills Track* past *Frys Hut* and the *slate mine*, before stopping for a cuppa at *Mitchell Station*. The track from Mitchell's to *Mt Sunday* was a pleasant, easy drive and *Mt Sunday* was conquered fairly easily also, apart from a tight manoeuvre around a log halfway up. Rumour has it that some paint may have been left here, but details are very sketchy...

Lunch was enjoyed at the intersection of what everyone was hoping to be the aptly named '*Son of a Bitch Spur Track*.' It turned out to be a major disappointment, so much so in fact, that it was starting to appear that the only 'hard' part of this trip was going to be the trip leader putting up with the whinging of disgruntled participants!

Fortunately, this changed almost immediately as we began a steep descent along *Grimmes Track*. What goes down must come back up, and despite some dozer work attempting to tame our ascent, the long twisting climb up the other side of *Grimmes Track* to *Blue Plain Spur* kept everyone busy (silent!!) for a while. Consequently it was a fairly contented group that set up camp at the bottom of *Butcher Country Track* that evening.

Next morning at Stan's suggestion we headed up the first section of *Butcher Country track*. Stan and Bethne set off early to do a recce with Alan and Vicki in hot pursuit and the rest of the stragglers still back at camp - one crew in particular busily packing away an impressive array of new camping gear.

The rock steps at the first section proved an interesting challenge for the drivers, with good wheel placement the key to forward progress. This was followed by a good, steep descent to the *Caledonia River Track*. Everyone enjoyed the really pretty drive winding along the *Caledonia river*, with multiple river crossings before the long climb up onto the *Howitt High Plains*. Stan's track selections proved excellent!

Lunch was at *Howitt Hut* and it was here that Alan and Vicki discovered a broken bolt on their rear suspension necessitating a slow steady drive back to civilization. For this they chose to retreat via *Brocks road* to *Mansfield*, with the rest of the crew heading down *Zeka Spur Track* to *Wonnangatta Valley*. After checking out the homestead area we headed out the southern end of the valley to the *Humphray River Track* where once again multiple river crossings abounded.

Our final challenge for the day was the long steady climb up *Water Spur Track* to the top of *Tea Tree Range*, where a well formed road led us back through the *Buckland Valley* to *Porepunkah* and home.

A most enjoyable weekend, with a great crew, visiting some truly wonderful country. No wonder we enjoy our four wheel driving!

Noel and Irene