



Club Trips

Alpine and Snowy River National Parks Cobberas and Bowen Wilderness Areas

Nov-Dec 2012

Participants: Barry Richardson & Dennis	Pajero
John Sullivan	Landcruiser
Murray & Judy McEachern	Pajero
Bruce Gooday	Landcruiser

This mid-week, five day trip was an excursion into the Cobberas Wilderness Area of the Alpine National Park, and the Bowen Wilderness Area of the Snowy River National Park. On the way to the wilderness areas we visited Mt Benambra, Dartmouth Dam, Taylors Crossing, and Limestone Creek, and returned home via the Washington Winch and Moscow Villa Hut.

The trip commenced on 13 November. We met at Tallangatta and proceeded to Mt Benambra where we enjoyed panoramic views of Dartmouth Dam and the surrounding area from the lookout platform on the Benambra fire tower. We stopped for lunch at the dam wall (Dartmouth 99% full at the time) before travelling to the Wombat PO, Kennedy's Hut, and Taylors Crossing, where we camped for the night. The following morning your truly was suffering from a severe dose of vertigo which caused the cancellation of the remainder of the trip (at that time).

With the trip leader unable to move from a prone position, evacuation first to Omeo and then to Wangaratta was organised without fuss by the rest of the crew. Fortunately we had a spare driver and were able to bring all vehicles and gear home with us – the patient travelling flat on his back on the back seat of John's Cruiser. The exercise highlighted the benefits of travelling with some very level-headed friends who refused to leave me in Omeo to recover, and insisted on giving up the remaining four days of the trip and returning me safely to Wangaratta. While I am very grateful for their decision, I am not surprised – that's what happens when you travel with members of the Wang 4WD Club.

We set out again on 5th December, but this time without Murray and Judy whose Xmas commitments had caught up with them. On day one we met at Myrtleford and followed the Alpine Way over Hotham to Omeo. Although it was officially summer, the nights had been cold and we were pleasantly surprised to find a fresh covering of snow on Mt Hotham. From Omeo we headed to Limestone Creek where we visited a limestone cave and set up camp for the night. As the country on that side of the range was still very green we were able to enjoy a campfire – as we did for the rest of the trip.



On day two we followed the Cobberas Trail, MacFarlane Flat Track, and Ingeegoodbee Track on our way to our camp on the Snowy River at Willis on the NSW Vic border. I had read that this route provided magnificent views of Mt Cobberas and the surrounding wilderness areas, and of the NSW ranges to the north.

We were not disappointed, a highlight being the 360 degree panorama from a helipad on Mt Menaak on the Ingeegoodbee Track. We all agreed that no words or photos could do justice to the experience – you just had to be there. The route is dry weather only. It is rated difficult due to several long steep climbs, particularly from the Ingeegoodbee River crossing, but all tracks were in good condition and were traversed without difficulty. And nothing compares to a swim and camp by the Snowy River surrounded by magnificent mountains.

Day three was Bowen Wilderness day. I had travelled part of the Bowen Trail several years ago with Stan Williams and wanted to revisit the area. In order to do so from our camp at Willis, we travelled down the Barry Way then across the Snowy River at McKillops Bridge. The plan was to follow the McKillops Bridge Road east, and then down Willis/Reid Road to its junction with the Bowen Track. I had checked with the Rangers at Orbost prior to the aborted November trip, and learned that a dozer had spent a long time working on tracks in the area prior to their reopening, following the winter seasonal closure. Unfortunately, since then there must have been slippage or major timber falls because we encountered a new



‘road closed’ sign which necessitated a revision of our plans. We kept to tracks which had been worked by the dozer and had a very interesting couple of hours on challenging 4WD tracks which included several ‘double black diamond’ sections. Colling Track in particular tested man and machine with what seemed to be an endless series of long steep climbs and equally long steep descents as we travelled across, rather than along, the ranges. The Bowen Track itself was a welcome relief with relatively easy driving and great scenery. That night we camped on the Snowy River at McKillops Bridge.



After two days on our own in wilderness areas, days four and five took us back to the rat race. First stop was an overnighter at Bentley Plain which is adjacent to the Moscow Villa Hut and the Washington Winch, and finally back over Hotham in dense fog to the parched country on the west side of the divide.

Conditions for the trip were ideal. The tracks had just been reopened and repaired and the weather couldn't have been better, with a sprinkling of snow

on Hotham on the first day, light rain as we packed up on the final day, and beautiful sunny days in between. And travelling mid-week meant that there was no other traffic apart from one intrepid soul we met on the Ingeegoodbee Track. There were no mechanical or tyre issues – just a few new pinstripes to remind us of the time we spent in the wilderness.

Bruce Gooday