

# Blair's Hut Trip

(Upper West Kiewa Valley – NE Vic)  
Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2014



With five vehicles the convoy set out from Mt Beauty at 9.05 a.m. in bright sunshine. After 3km we left the bitumen and headed into the hills to the south of the township.

Soon we left the minor road and climbed up a steep and narrow track under the power lines to reach the West Kiewa Road.

As we climbed towards Big Hill, the driving was easy but the scenery as spectacular. Magnificent views of the township, the regulating pondage and right down the Kiewa Valley. Then to the east, partially hidden by cloud, was Mt Bogong, Victoria's highest mountain (1,984m).

As we followed the West Kiewa logging track we saw some interesting stands of "stags" or dead trees and some areas with vigorous regrowth after the bushfires of 2003. This road was closed for a year in 2012 due to heavy rain creating washaways and land slips which exposed the high voltage underground power line that supplies Mt Hotham.

The track narrowed and we crossed the West Kiewa River three times.

After travelling 40km we had morning tea at Diamantina Stockyards (a great camping location with a bush toilet), then walked to **Blair's Hut\***, less than 2km away. We removed footwear and waded or rock-hopped across the West Kiewa River to reach the hut on the other side. After a delightful 30 minutes in and around the hut, we walked back to the stockyards for lunch.

After lunch we drove back along the logging track towards Dungey's Track. The previous day's rain caused the steep track down to the river to be quite slippery and challenging.

One final river crossing before we passed through Simmonds Gap and up the Tawonga Gap Track. Our next stop was on top of the ridge overlooking Mt Beauty on one side and facing Mt Buffalo on the other. This would have to be the best view in north-east Victoria!

From there we descended to the Tawonga Gap Lookout on the Mt Beauty to Bright road where we said our farewells. Thanks, Paul, for a great trip with some interesting commentary about the area and its history.

## Participants:

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|--|-----------------------|
| • Paul (leader) & Helen L'Huillier (members) | Mitsubishi Pajero VRX |
| • Steve & Roni McDowell (visitors)           | Mitsubishi Challenger |
| • Andrew Brown & Charlotte (members)         | Nissan GQ Patrol      |

- Tony Miller (member)
- Bob & Jenny Flower (visitors)

LandRover Discovery 300tdi  
LandRover Discovery

Distance: 77km. Average speed: 15.8km/hr. Moving time: 4hr 53min. Total time: 7hr 45min

**\*A little history**

The hut is the second on the site. The original, built by Frank and Tim Blair (cattlemen) in 1923-24, was burnt down around 1930 and rebuilt by Frank and his son in 1932. It is constructed of Alpine Ash (referred to as Woolly Butt by the old-timers); all logs in the hut were axed except the door. The hut was built without a door and then the doorway was cut with a jamb nailed to the end of the logs and a hole cut for a tin chimney. The hut originally had a bark roof which was replaced by a gable tin roof in 1968. The hut measures 6m x 3.8m. The internal stone-lined fireplace is unusual. It is almost identical to Dibbins Hut. The hut's caretakers are 'The Alpine School - Dinner Plain' and the Blair family.

*Reporter — Helen L'Huillier*