

## Eldorado, Beechworth, Yackandah, Stanley

OR: Wangaratta to Eternity

Written by: David Jackson

One minute to 8 o'clock the last of the team arrived at Macas in Wang for the start of our clubs first 'hard' trip of the year. Rather than a driver only in each vehicle - which is common, we had lots of passengers, 11 members in 5 vehicles. Tally was Nissans 2, Toyos 2, Landrover 1, chainsaws 4. (in no particular order thank you very much). With medical envelopes checked into the glove boxes and final supplies grabbed from Subway, we hit the road at 8:17

First stop was the dredge at Eldorado where we aired down. While the water level was quite a bit down from the previous Saturdays (100mm rain) 4th rece trip, today's weather was great, no rain in sight. Maybe we'll do the trip without bypassing some of the more slippery (read impassable) sections.



As leader, I gave the group the old "4WDiving is a dangerous sport - can result in vehicle/physical damage - there is no disgrace in taking the "chicken" detours etc etc etc WELL!! you'd have thought I drove a Landrover - they just turned their backs on me and muttered "Yea yea yea - just get on with it" (or something similar)

Off down Old Coach Road with Tom (Nissan) now codenamed 'Charlie' (Tail end Charlie) bringing up the rear and then 'Richards Track' where we had an 'interesting' half an hour learning first hand about the Eldorado granite sand and what it means to be last through a steep washed out sloppy section. No damage but Nissans down 5 points. (snatch penalty).

Into the Eldorado reserve area where we had morning tea at the very picturesque 'quarry lake', we then played 'follow the leader' into some interesting pre-planned scenarios in the gravel pit area. Results - Toyotas down 1 point (dnf - did not finish section) Landrover down 2 points (dnf) Nissans perfect score with 2 additional bonus points for (PO) photo opportunity. Oh yes and the



Toyota another 2 bonus points (PO) as well.

Onto the road towards Kangaroo Crossing where we planned on 'viewing only' the rapids across the causeway. After insisting to show us how to cross fast flowing water, Toyotas earned another bonus point.

We backtracked then to Neioffs Track and then a very wet short cut through Cypress Track onto CFA Track - lots of washouts and steep downhill for a lunch stop at Spring Ck Cascades. This was indeed a highlight of our trip viewing the mighty cascades at very close range (closer for some than others) a perfect stopping point considering the amount of rainfall in the previous 36 hrs.



After lunch up Malakoff Road bypassing Beechworth proper and taking an exciting rutted out unknown track (to all) to reach an unnamed slippery, steep, washed out, muddy, and

rutted track that parallels Red Hill Road for quite some considerable time. This section when dry is an exciting trip, however after 100mm of rain - well that's what the word 'hard' is reserved for. As a sideline - except for a couple of wet spots most competent drivers in the club would have had no real problem with the trip so far. But now with the rain, things turned very er exciting.





This is the area that stopped a companion and me the weekend before (4th rece) with well over 120mm on the day while we were driving and without a chainsaw we could easily have remained marooned overnight at the bottom of a 'monster' hill that we couldn't get back up with a giant tree across our path.

We had to dig out and drive over a 1200mm embankment to get down onto the road to get out, we were again caught in between fallen trees in both directions. We cut through the head of one tree with a bow saw and after 1.5 hours we were freed once more. Yes I paid my fine at the club meeting - just glad to be there to tell my story and warn others. (chain saw or two - mandatory in the high country)

Another hill which stopped us the week before proved a show stopper once more - however not for the mighty Landrover this time as she sailed straight up (we'd practised before hand) Nissans down 1 point (MT multiple tries) Toyota down 2 points (MT)

Big tree across the track - taken care of by single chainsaw by 'Charlie'

Arrived at Rocky Point Mine and had a quick look and then down the monster hill of Rocky Point Track where we found the giant tree still sitting where we were caught out the week before. However this time (with the help of the cavalry) 9 blokes, 4 chainsaws and 2 camera girls, the Wang 4WD club had this mothers measure. 20 minutes and we were on our way.



Up Casper track we detoured back through an extensive mud area to the Wallaby mine area and then onto the Lower 9ML Rd and onto No 1 Rd in order to get to our extreme sections of the trip. If you'd read the pre trip report I wasn't at all fussed if the guys didn't want to do these two tracks.



First one was called 'Long Tom' (no connection to our Tail end Charlie) which is in two sections normally both very hard, both Dean (Toyota) 2nd rece, Tom (Nissan) and I (Landrover) 3rd rece managed to climb it and descend it without incident. However this time with the rain and someone with a machine rendered it inaccessible. Despite this Dean (Toyota) gets 1 bonus point for having a real go - simply too muddy/slippery.

Time is moving on and we had one more to at least look at - she is called 'Eternity' and its not that it goes forever, as in reality the extreme section is only 2-300 metres - it's just that it is boulder strewn with many 600mm step ups, very, very steep and covered in very loose rocks. The trip rules were 'if any one wanted to climb her then they had to descend her first to see what they were getting into'. It took about 15

minutes to get to the top via an alternative route, we found ourselves perched on the top of an almighty hill looking down over all the area including the previously formidable 'Long Tom'

I'd descended 'Eternity' on my first rece, descended and climbed her on my second rece along with Dean (Toyota) and climbed her alone on my 3rd rece with Dean and young David as passengers (I had Tom and Nick in reserve in case something went wrong). I'd just about had enough of 'Miss Eternity' however the hard trip was what it was about today.

A few of the guys went walked over the top to have a look - I had just about every one convinced to just peer over the side and see if they could see the bottom and



then 'give her a miss' when Dean decided he had to leave for home a little early via 'Eternity' he apparently checked with Jackie his co-pilot who agreed with the descent. All went well, we cleared the face of the hill of spectators and over the Toyo went with every one else's eyes affixed on this little BJ 40 (lovingly called the Mule) bouncing its way down.



So the story goes - sometime on the way down Dean and Jackie decided they'd like to take the 'Mule' back up again which they promptly did once at the bottom.

Now somewhere between the 'Long Tom' attempt and the next few moments in time, the Mule spat its front Diff lock - you know how mules can be. Which left all three - Dean, Jackie and mule stuck in the rough on the side of eternity (hugging the tree line) Giant rocks in front - gianter rocks behind and a lame mule. Jackie left the stricken vessel and set up a camera posie near by while Dean and half the crew set about extricating the Tojo. A bit of winch here, a bit of winch there and soon mule was backing its way to the bottom.

One of our members suggested to me that Jackie may now be suffering a slight mental melt down but Hey! she was as good as ever. Dean told me later that he was very proud of how Jackie handled the whole event, but in future he wouldn't be bullied into climbing big hills that scared him. We gave the mule 1 bonus point for the descent.

Well after this we headed home - we were about half hour overtime, some of us even more. I still had another few areas we were going to visit on the way back to Wang as a warm down - we'll leave them for another day.

Results of the trip; no vehicle damage - no personal damage - lots of great memories and certainly closer friendships. Oh yes and the results of the points test. Toyotas plus 2, Landrover minus 2 and Nissans minus 4,

I had a great time, hope you all did - special thanks to Tom, Dean and Brett (son in law and soon to be member) and Nick (hopefully a new member soon) for your assistance in the reces and the support of all on the day, really appreciated it. There will be a fantastic film library both still and video available soon. Keep watching. Also, soon on Facebook - look for your invitation. Those on the trip - Dean and Jacki (photographer) Cunico '2IC' BJ40 Toyota mule, Tom and Zoe (photographer) Barnard 'Tail end Charlie' GQ Patrol and passenger Justin Nyman, President David 'Robbo' Robinson GQ Patrol and passenger David Ashford new member. Rob Holden 100 series Toyota and passenger David Ferguson my grandson and yours truly David Jackson 'Leader' Disco 3 and passenger photographer Terry Dillon.

Just a few thoughts/highlights from some of our people - more to come.

#### **Jacki**

The day was coming to an end and what a great day it had been, waterfalls, wildlife, fun people and muddy excitement. dj announced "back in Wang by 5pm everyone". BEAUTIFUL.... My little boy (Dean) begs - "just one more time, just one more time. It felt like an eternity. My little boy and his little mule are wrenched around a pine tree looking at what lay above and what lies below. I had said earlier that day "The Mule is proving reliable.... next word illegible"

#### **Dean**

We left Apco at about 8am heading for a wonderful day 4WDing. To cut a long story short, coming down Eternity I noticed that the recent rain had shifted the rocks and boulders, changing the playing field. Jacki was beside me - I told



her that we'll just go down then be on our way home. Reaching the bottom I decided to go back up - first big mistake! Passing the first difficult section, the Mule faltered. The driver's side wheel was still; with diff locks this shouldn't happen. Tom, Justin and young David came to my aid, letting tyres down trying to get the Mule moving, we winched across and up to allow me to reverse back down. Thank you to all who were present.

**David Ferguson (Young David)**

Cold start, but warmed up. Rough at times but slow at other times. Rode in a Toyota, pretty good. Dean was the man of the day.

**Terry**

A very nervous start for our leader but he quickly warmed to the task. Trip was well planned and expertly lead. Agree with (young) David: Dean & Tom drove well. Our president tried to bend a tree and Rob H avoided walking on water, only because he had sidesteps. Discos are very comfortable but not so good at ledges! Lots of good fun, an excellent day, good company and wonderful country, so close to home. Thanks DJ & fellow travellers.

**Justin**

Well done David on leading last weekend's antics. Lots of fun tracks & places of interest and all so close to home. We couldn't have asked for a better day with just enough MUD, fast water & slippery hills, mixed together with some spectacular scenery and lovely company.

**Tom**

An all round great trip with lots of highlights. Definitely one to remember and do again. Thanks Dave for all your hard work and preparation, thanks to Dean for showing us the way, thanks to Jacki for letting him and thanks to everyone who came along and making it the terrific day it was. Exceptional weather, good driving, superbly prepared and lead. Terrific people. Great trip

**Zoe**

Scenery was good, especially the waterfall. Great friendly company. Had a few nervous laughs and some humorous moments. Look forward to doing it all again. Thanks to Dave for the great leading and everyone who came along to make it a really enjoyable trip

**View Photos:**

You can view photos of the day on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=17133&id=100001929749167&l=1653eee262>