

# Trip Reports:

Trip report on Saturdays Birthday drive.

12 vehicles (of all types) and 21 individuals of all ages - some newer members, some old timers and some prospective new members - marshalled at the Apco service centre on Saturday morning before 9am, after introductions, filling in of the required paperwork and checking the vehicles over we left in convoy at exactly 9:30 for a rendezvous at the Eldorado dredge where we picked up yet another vehicle now totalling 13 and 22 participants. Here we lowered our tyre pressures (some of us twice) in preparation for the days event.

We'd had a fair bit of rain the preceding week, however a good day and a half of fine weather saw our expectations high for good traction, no dust and an occasional mud puddle. We weren't disappointed one bit.

First we traversed the Eldorado granite sand country with some tight tracks, steep (very) pinches, an occasional short cut and a fair bit of tyre placement practice.

There was (almost) always an alternative track to take but on most occasions the entire convoy tackled everything thrown at them except when some big blue Toyota rearranged the obstacle (track).

We had morning tea at the quarry lake, made a quick 'pit' stop and proceeded towards our next adventure in the Beechworth area. A look around the Eldorado track work saw us in Beechworth for lunch.

A few of the party sneaked off to the bakery for supplies so after a brief feed we were off and into it. The convoy took a back road out of town and then into a tight rutted bush track to gain access to the Beechworth Pines. Here we took a dead straight line for about an hour - the convoy revelled in steep downhills and amazing uphill thru dense timber tracks, mud holes, wash aways and incredible views.

Despite a little 'grappling' for traction on some of the tougher hill climbs, ALL vehicles made it through for a photo shoot before we headed off through the Stanley area to our third and most demanding section of the day - 'The Murrumgee Hills'.

Not too many of the group had done Murrumgee before - it sort of creeps up on you. Half an hour driving a bush transit route through Stanley to Murrumgee and then down an obscene off road gnarley hill, which literally takes your breath away as it goes down and down and down - round a bend and before you've taken a sigh of relief that's its over - we are back going up the next hill (called the Murrumgee Track) an off camber steep hard turn to the left saw us all reposition ourselves in our seats as we saw what was in store for us for the next 20 minutes if all went well.

Rock ledges, washouts, loose (big) rocks, very, very steep (and unforgiving) all the way, can't afford to make one mistake here or you have to make a new start 'in the hill' the leader stopped at what appears to be the top (it's only half way - we didn't mention that to any one at the time) and waits with baited breath for the car behind to arrive - wow there it is, coming over the ridge - followed in a few minutes by car 3 and then car 4.

Car 5 where are yoooo???

Apparently another big blue Toyota struck an extra loose patch and had to make a fresh start from 'in the hill' which of course put some of the preceding cars at somewhat of a disadvantage. Nothing time and a little loving doesn't fix and before we knew it ALL 13 vehicles had made it to the "top". A lot of back slapping and Hoorah's and the occasional 'no worries mate' and we were ready to proceed - not wanting to spoil the surprise we all then hit the second part of the Murrumungee track and again all got to the actual top without incident - renewed confidence and a new skill set for some meant no problems with this section.

We lost a fair bit of our remaining time on the hill and wanting to finish a little earlier than usual for our birthday dinner, so we decided to call it 'an end' and head to the bitumen and home, the remainder we would leave for another day.

Great job by all - always fantastic to take the club out on a local drive - watch out for the sequel drive within the next couple of months where we will concentrate on the Murrumungee and Gapstead area only, there are a fantastic amount of tracks in this local area which really do warrant experiencing.



Photo: *Not a 'Blue Toyota' but an equally desperate character....*

If you didn't make it this trip - make yourselves available for the next one.

Thanks to 2IC Tom Barnard and TEC Tim Meek

dj

### **Birthday Bash Dinner (Eldorado Pub)**

When we arrived at 5.45pm, the fire was hot but there was no-one else from the Club there yet! Soon people started to arrive muttering something about DJ taking them "way out west" ...and being a bit late.

They were cold and hungry and ready to order food, err, and the occasional drink.

DJ arrived and we were away with lots of talk and then the food arrived. It was great, and even though the crowd was a bit smaller than in past years there was banter about misdeeds carried out that day and a few previous days too. It was all in good humour.

Robo saw the light on and dropped in after main course...muttering something about how good the day's trip was even if it was a bit slow compared to his normal pace...

All in all, it was a great night, good food, good company and a fitting [prelude to the next day's event.

Congratulations to Steve Fuller for the event's organization and the birth of your son Thomas in the previous week...we hope you are all well.      Andrew Brown