

Trip Reports:

Track Torque

Snowy River – Deddick Trail

7-11 November

Participants: Sue & Graham (money man) Abotomey Toyota Landcruiser
Doreen & Dave (never look back) Clarke Toyota Cab

Chassis

Pete (navigator) Carlyon	Mazda BT50 Freestyle
Barry (driver) Richardson	Mitsubishi Pajero
Bruce (lost leader) Gooday	Toyota Landcruiser



Day 1: Day one went according to plan. We met outside the Bakery at Myrtleford, and in fine sunny weather headed up the Great Alpine Road to Dinner Plain for morning tea. The drive up Mount Hotham at this time of the year must be one of the most scenic in Australia.

We turned off the Great Alpine Road at Dinner Plain and followed the Dinner Plain Track to 'Dog's Grave' – a monument to a bushman's dog. The original grave dates back to the mid-1800s, and the monument pays tribute to the loneliness and hardships of the cattlemen of the time and to the bond between man and his dog. But what was once a very isolated spot on a rough bush track beside a cattleman's hut is now a tourist attraction on a well formed dirt road complete with picnic tables, barriers, and a toilet.

From the Dog's Grave we travelled to the Bentley Plain campground via Omeo and stopped off at the Washington Winch on the way. Adjacent to the campground is the Moscow Villa Hut, a log and stone hut (with the best timber floor you will ever see in a hut) built by a bushman/fire spotter in 1942. Although we had a large shelter and the Bentley Plain Hut to ourselves that night we elected to eat outside and sit around the campfire under the stars – the weather was just so good.



Day 2: Day two did not go to plan. The weather was not so good. We were able to pack up before the rain started but by the time we reached Buchan steady rain had set in and the locals told us that the forecast was for lots more of the same for the rest of the week. After a coffee, and the first of several changes to the itinerary for the trip, we decided to have a look at where we had intended to camp at Sandy Point on the Snowy River on our way down to Orbost. The rain had eased by the time we arrived at Sandy Point. But setting up camp there and spending the rest of the day in tents did not appeal, so we had lunch, I went for a swim in the Snowy, and then we retreated to the bitumen and headed for Orbost. By the time we got to Orbost the sun was shining,

so instead of implementing Plan C (cabins by the coast) we decided to continue on to the Raymond Falls camping area – our original camp site for night three. Once again we had the camp to ourselves (who else would be silly enough to go camping with a forecast of 100 mils of rain at any time?). Priorities were to set up camp (with tarps over the tents for when it rained again) collect wood for the fire, and investigate the falls. Someone forgot to tell Barry they were the Raymond Falls and not the Barry Falls, and fortunately when Barry fell at the falls the major damage was to his ego.

By this time we had had two full days of driving and had gained a day, but at the expense of an intended two relaxing afternoons by the river. To their credit, my fellow travellers were quite happy to go with the flow and adjust as necessary to the inclement weather. That night spirits were high as we sat around the camp fire under a starry sky. The rest of the crew had by now resigned themselves to missing out on tackling the Deddick Trail. When we were in Orbost earlier in the day I checked with the Ranger at Bendoc and he confirmed that the Deddick Trail was no place to be when it was wet, and neither was the Bowen Trail – a very good alternative to the Deddick.

So they went off to bed expecting plan D (McKillop's Bridge the long way around) to be implemented on day three.

Day 3: We had all wasted our time and much effort for some of us, covering our tents. The night was fine and we woke to a fine and sunny day. I had no trouble getting agreement to at least having a look at the condition of the Deddick Trail before giving up on it. So after Barry, Dave and Doreen checked out the falls again we set off in fine weather and by morning tea time had reached the start of the trail which travels for about 45k through the centre of the Snowy River National Park.

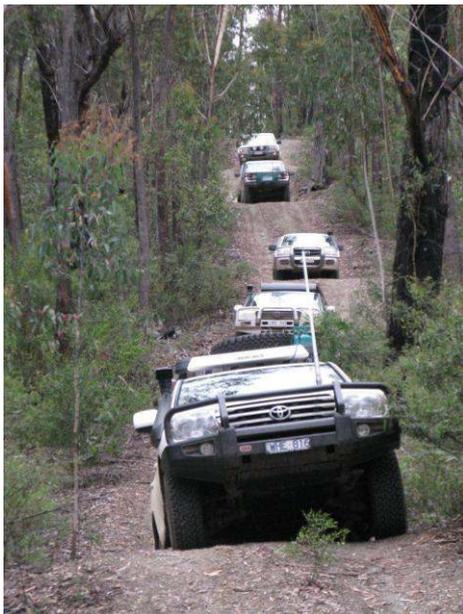


The trail was in very good condition having been reopened only a couple of weeks earlier and driving was relatively easy although quite slow with most of us in low range all of the way.

There are many steep climbs and descents, most of which have countless 'humpty-doos' across them. These had recently been rebuilt and were the steepest and highest I have ever seen. No doubt by season's end their crests will have been levelled off by vehicles without high clearance. Pete started that process with his Mazda.

The scenery was spectacular at times and the vegetation was continually changing as we moved through the various micro-climates created by the ranges. This really is the High Country at its best with vegetation ranging from dry woodlands in the open areas to giant manna gum forests and dense treeferns in gullies. The various creek and river crossings were shallow although one must have been a bit too daunting for Dave who handed the wheel to Doreen (just for the crossing).

The 'Staircase' on the Deddick Trail is different to the staircase we were accustomed to in our area (before Parks Vic 'treated' it with a dozer). The Deddick Staircase has no loose rocks and sheer step-ups but gets its name from the almost endless succession of humpty-doos. It is very long and steep and has a well formed, almost smooth surface.



Near the northern end of the trail we stopped to take in spectacular views of the Snowy River valley with the river and McKillop's bridge far below. You really should have been there.

We arrived into camp at McKillop's Bridge early enough that night for Dave and Doreen to cook the long awaited roast dinner which Barry and I were happy to share with them. We had the customary camp fire but kept our distance as the humidity rose and the temperature hovered around the thirty degrees mark at 9.00pm. At 10 o'clock there was a scramble to our tents as large rain drops gave us a taste of the night ahead.

Day 4: The rain persisted on and off all night and was quite steady at pack up time in the morning – and there is not much worse than packing up in the rain. No matter how well you were able to keep the rain off your tent in the night, you and your tent (inside and out) will be drenched by the time you have finished. And so it was as we left a very soggy McKillop's Bridge campsite. The one consolation was that since we were within striking distance of home it didn't matter that all of our gear was wet. Sue kept talking about hot showers, dry clothes, and a warm bed.

By morning tea time the rain had started to ease, and by lunchtime, at the Limestone Creek camping area, we were enjoying bright sunshine. What else was there to do but get the soggy gear out into the sun and set up camp for the night? How the mood changes with the weather. We were all of one mind in that decision and finally were able to enjoy a relaxing afternoon. Pete had a snooze in the sun, Sue and Graham went for a walk and followed some brumbies for twenty minutes or so (I reckon they must have been well downwind of the horses after four days without a shower), Doreen minded the fire, and Barry took Dave and I across the

creek to some caves he knew of nearby. And just for good measure, six riders (complete with horses) dropped in for a chat.



Bruce Gooday

Day 5: After a 29 degree night at McKillops we were a bit surprised to find ice on the tables when we awoke at Limestone Creek. But the sun was shining and we were able to pack up dry gear. The drive back via Benambra and Omeo was punctuated by a stop at McMillan's Lookout outside of Omeo, a minor unspecified delay in Omeo, and lunch back at Dinner Plain.

The end result was an interesting five days in the company of some very tolerant people (happy campers) who were all prepared to take it as it comes and enjoy the experience. The Snowy River National Park is an area we don't visit often enough.

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EDITOR'S BIT: Thanks for the year

Our club is a small regional 4WD club with members who participate in a variety of activities. As a club we have had a very busy year, not just 4WD but we have participated in many community events. As part of the committee I would like to thank all the members who volunteered their time and sweat in helping with track clearing, hut maintenance, flood relief and charity rides. The heart of a club is its people and we have some very committed people in our club who care about 4WDing and the greater community.

I would like to thank the committee for the work they have done throughout the year, let's remember that these people give their time and skills voluntarily. Thanks to all the people who have led trips, run training days and to our members who were able to attend them.

Thanks to all the people who have contributed to the newsletter. I know that trips reports and articles can take up a lot of time but the newsletter is about sharing our experiences. Any suggests on improving the newsletter would be welcomed. Don't forget, no newsletter in January, but I would love to have any trip reports either club trips or private trips, so send me an email.

I would also like to take the opportunity to wish everyone a Happy and Safe Christmas and New Year. Hope you all get a chance to go bush and remember there's a trip on in mid January.

Cheers
Maria Lucas