

We are grateful for the opportunity to represent our club in this event, and hope that our contribution was also of benefit to the organisers and may lead to an ongoing relationship in the future.

Irene and Noel

(Photos: Irene H and David B)



We were also fortunate to win the raffle for this wonderful photo of Blowhard Hut. The ARB fridge in the photo was won by David and Chris.

## Well Done

A big thank you to Irene and Noel for this trip report but can I add a vote of thanks to all Club members who participated in this event and represented us all by doing so.

## **Kate's Trip Report – Buckland Valley training weekend.**

Burkey and I arrived on the Friday night at camp to find a nice little fire going with a few people gathered around. We had travelled with Tom and David from Wangaratta and after stopping for a quick meal in Myrtleford we continued with our trusty little trailer behind us taking shortcuts as we followed Tom and hoping to goodness he knew where he was going. After a few drinks and a catch-up it was time to hit the sack for me as I was pretty tired. Burkey stayed up and, I believe, didn't come to bed till the wee hours of the morning.

**Day one** – Awoke to a beautiful but crisp morning. Breakfast on the way and some warm clothes was in order. It was great to see a good turnout for the weekend as we viewed all the vehicles and their attachments. There were some other visitors which were not part of the club but we definitely outnumbered them all. After greeting everyone, washing up after breakfast and teasing Chris and DJ with their 'camping in style' 240volt kettle and generator, Burkey and I assisted with the setup of the recovery gear whilst those for training went to attend the theory with Stan.

Craig was the instructor for the recovery gear and gave some excellent tips on how to recover a vehicle. A very informative session and I'm sure those who attended and participated learnt a great deal on recovery

gear, their uses and the different ways to recover a vehicle. I, for one, won't forget the tent pegs! Thanks Craig.

Then onto the water crossing after eating some lunch. Burkey, Tom, David and I had scouted the river earlier and deemed the usual crossing was too shallow and tame. We picked another spot nearby and decided it was the go. First I gave a demonstration on how to cross a river, and then one by one each person had a go and all performed very well. There was a family camping in the area and they were very interested spectators. We persuaded the father and his 3 boys to have a go and he accomplished the feat with no problems. Another potential member for the club? I hope so!

After the trainers assessed the trainees in the practical sessions and all had dinner some of us decided to attend a night drive. Tom went in his new grandpa Patrol with David and Ian, Craig in his FJ Cruiser with new member Toby, DJ and Chris in the Disco and Burkey and I in our Cruiser. I drove the Cruiser and as it was the first time I drove with the new front diff locker it took a little getting used to but I got the hang of it pretty quickly. We travelled some interesting tracks and up to one of the helipads where we came across some campers. The view of the stars was magnificent and it reminded me how beautiful nature can really be. Then back to camp for a few more drinks and some tall tales around the campfire. I slept well that night.

**Day 2** – Another beautiful morning however, not as cold as the previous morning. I was looking forward to the trip for the day as I had been wanting to do it for some time. Breakfast, done and dusted, Burkey and I packed most of our gear in the trailer so when we came back we could just hook it up to the Cruiser and go. A small group of us were travelling to the Blue Rag whilst the others were taking a smaller trip elsewhere. Tom was the leader with David in the Patrol, Burkey and I in the Cruiser, Andrew and his son Evan in their Patrol, Irene in her Pajero, Toby in his Prado and Ian was Charlie in his Patrol ute. We all set off at 9.15am and travelled some tracks before airing down. Most of the tracks were ok and as the weather was dry no one had any difficulty with traction. We climbed up and up and made our way towards the base of the Blue Rag. Here Tom gave some instruction on how to negotiate some of the more difficult parts of the track and paired up David with Toby, and I with Irene. Everybody handled it all really well and we made our way to the top at the trig point where the view is totally captivating. Wow! Words fail me. Such a beautiful place and well worth the climb. After working so hard to arrive at the top we were all hungry. Lunch was consumed alfresco style at 'A La Trig Blue Rag' and I guess we couldn't have had eaten at a better place with better views.

It was soon time for us to make our way back down and head back. Toby with Tom, and Irene went great in their vehicles and managed to negotiate the difficult parts very well. We arrived at one of the snow tollway stops and parted company. Irene, Andrew with Evan, and Ian going one way and Tom with David, Toby, Burkey and I heading back to the camp to pick up our remaining belongings. On the way back we made a short detour to the No.2 helipad with some more wonderful views to be had before arriving back at camp at approx 4.30pm. We were greeted by Graeme and Helene Martin whom were staying on a few more days (lucky devils). They had been looking after all our gear – thanks heaps guys! Toby left to go home almost as soon as we arrived at camp (probably exhausted poor fella). With our respective gear stowed back in place and after a quick chat, Burkey and I and Tom and David finally headed home.

Another fantastic weekend with great company, lots of laughs to share and some great 4 wheel driving.

By Kate Burke