

Trip Report

Alpine National Park – Cobberas trail

22-25 November 2015

Graham & Sue Abotomey – Ford Ranger
Ian & Trish Barry – Nissan Ute
David Blore – Toyota LC

Barry Richardson - Pajero
John Sullivan – Toyota LC
Bruce Gooday – Toyota LC

On this trip we travelled through some of the most remote areas in the Victorian High Country. The Cobberas Trail is in the northern part of the Alpine National Park to the north-east of Omeo. The trail is part of the original route used by early settlers travelling between the Monaro district in NSW and Omeo. From the south, the trail commences near Native Dog Flat on the Limestone Road, passes through a High Country Plains area known as The Playgrounds and joins the MacFarlane Flat Track near the source of the Murray River. Further east the track links up with the Ingeegoodbee Track and the Snowy River Road.

On day one, a Sunday, we met at Myrtleford and left at about 9.00am for the drive over Mt Hotham. Before we reached Harrietville it was obvious that many cyclists were heading in the same direction as us. When we started the climb up the mountain we realised that we would be sharing the road with lots of lycra all of the way to the top. Like counting the sand dunes in the Simpson, counting the cyclists was given up after about the first fifteen minutes up the mountain – there were hundreds of them all doing some very serious pedal pushing. Fortunately for us it was early in the day and we encountered few kamikaze riders coming towards us down the mountain.

Our intended quiet coffee stop at Dinner Plain was like Bourke Street on a Friday afternoon with people everywhere and hardly a parking space to be found, so after a short stop we continued on to the Omeo Bakery for a coffee and lunch. Fuel tanks were topped up at Benambra (no fuel at Omeo on a Sunday except for those who can use a Caltex card at the self-serve) and camp site for the night at Limestone Creek was reached mid-afternoon, with plenty of time to set up camp and explore the cave on the other side of the creek. Limestone Creek was our first of several encounters with high country brumbies. There is plenty of evidence of their presence with many fresh piles of dung along the tracks.

Day two was the day for some serious 4WDing relieved by morning tea and lunch stops on the grassy plains of The Playgrounds and MacFarlane's Flat. The Cobberas Trail is a dry-weather-only track rated as difficult – Ron Moon advises simply “not for the faint hearted”. Along the way there is some great scenery, especially along the eastern side of Mt Cobberas No 1. Several small creek crossings were negotiated without difficulty as was the crossing of the Ingeegoodbee River. There is a long steep climb from the river to the ridge line, then an easy run to Mt Menaak and the nearby helipad from which there is one of the best 360 degree views in the whole of the High Country. After soaking up the view we descended to the Snowy River Road and headed north to our camp at Willis on the banks of the Snowy River, once again arriving mid-afternoon.

There had been some serious track clearing of the Cobberas Trail prior to its reopening at the end of October. Although the surface of the trail had not been repaired, many large trees had been removed, and at two spots where the fallen trees were too large for the track clearing crew, detour tracks had been cut around the fallen trees. Our sincere thanks go to the track clearing crew who I understand were volunteers (most likely a 4WD club). If you are out there and reading this – well done – you made us feel rather guilty for not doing our bit in our own area at the start of the season.

The camp site by the Snowy River at Willis only needed a hot shower to get a 5 star rating. We all found flat shady spots and most of the crew enjoyed a relaxing swim in the fast flowing river. An environmental release of water from Lake Jindabyne prior to the trip ensured that there was plenty, but not too much, water. As there were no fire restrictions at the time we were able to enjoy a camp fire (as we did at Limestone Creek and later at Bentley Plain).

On day three we travelled back down the Snowy River Road to Gelantipy, stopping along the way at the old Suggan Buggan School House which was built about 1860 by the O'Rourkes – the first permanent settlers of Suggan Buggan. From Gelantipy we enjoyed a forest drive west to Bentley Pain where we set up camp for the night. The Bentley Plain campground is a short walk from the Moscow Villa Hut which must be the most palatial hut in the High Country. As for the previous two nights, we had the campground to ourselves and again enjoyed a campfire with wood provided by Graham and the Ranger.

Day four was return home day with coffee at the Omeo Bakery and lunch and ice-creams at Harrierville.

Overall, we travelled about 800 kilometres. We enjoyed sunny 26 degree days and cool nights. There was no vehicle damage, no mechanical issues, no one needed a second go at any of the hill-climbs, and no other traffic on the Cobberas Trail. Many thanks to my fellow travelers for making the trip one of the most enjoyable I have been on in the High Country.

Bruce Gooday

Edi Cutting Xmas Weekend

On Friday, there was some preparation attended to for the Xmas weekend with the cleaning of the fire pit, setting up of the club marquee and hanging up the red and white balloons to guide members to the campground. Thanks to Graeme Martin for helping with the marquee and hanging the balloons, despite popping some of them. Nev and Monica French arrived after lunch and set up their tents. At 3.00pm I left to go back home to get ready for my work Xmas party that evening. During my absence, Graham and Sue Abotomey, Damian, Kerry and Tom O'Connor, and John and Beryl Strang arrived. A lovely campfire kept everybody warm I was told when I returned at nearly midnight.

Saturday morning was very leisurely with members having breakfast and spending time chatting with each other. Graeme Martin had already left at 7.15am to attend a meeting in Merrijig. The O'Connor's packed up and left after breakfast to attend a wedding that day and just before lunch DJ arrived and brought a guest, Peter Squire, with him. After introductions were completed we all had lunch before heading out to the planned trip of the day with the first destination being Deer Hut.

Well...the track to the hut turned out to be interesting with lots of twists and turns, ruts, tight passages and a couple of fallen trees which Graham Abotomey dealt with competently with his trusty chainsaw. It was a track which required lots of negotiating skills and everybody tackled it very well. The effort to turn 6 vehicles around the sardine can of a parking space was remarkable. The track was a one way in/ one way out and with the smile on his face I knew Burke was having fun. Had the track been wet it would have been difficult. Robbo caught up with us after waiting at the end of the hut track and continued with the group for the rest of the drive.

Due to the time it took to traverse this particular track we were unable to visit the other locations, so the unanimous decision was to return back to camp. We headed back via Black Range Track to find