

## Southern Explorers Four Wheel Drive Trip Report Grampians, Victoria – 21 to 25 February 2019 Tour Leaders: Obee & Dee

### *Journey to the Grampians*

A number of the group made their way separately to the Grampians, however 6 cars met at the Shell Service Station, Taillem Bend at 09:30 to travel in convoy. We made Kaniva for lunch, stopping just off the main street by good toilet and park facilities (and a café). After sustenance and a stretch of the legs we were back on the road again, but not for long as I had inadvertently left a plate and knife on the bonnet – aerodynamic at 60kph, the plate flew up at the windscreen and bounced on the road at 80kph. The knife had lodged by the windscreen wipers and Ian successfully rescued the undamaged melamine plate from the other side of the road, back about 50m. I am pleased to say that no further issues were encountered, so after another brief stop and a stretch of the legs at Green Lake, we found ourselves in Halls Gap. Four of the 10 strong group stayed in the Halls Gap Caravan Park with superb views of the towering rock formations whilst the other six free camped at the Plantation Camp Ground about 10km from Halls Gap with equally splendid views of the rugged ranges.



Happy hour was at the Plantation Camp Ground where we all enjoyed nibbles and were advised of the planned route for the following day and the start time of 09:30 from the Plantation Camp Ground. After a long day's driving we all retired to our respective accommodation for dinner, a chat and bed.

### ***Drive No. 1: Friday***

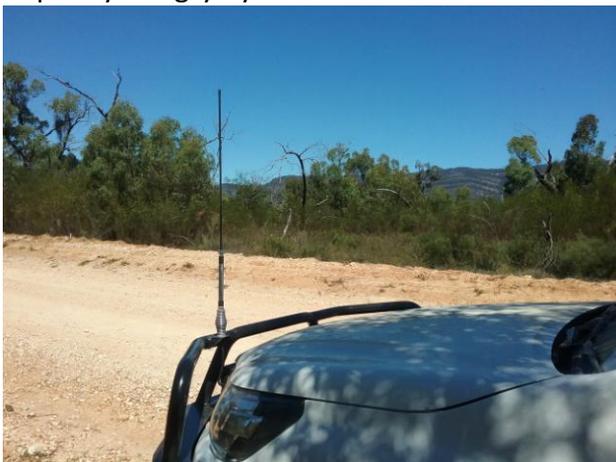
*Mount Zero Road to Roses Gap, Roses Gap Road to Wartook (Valley), Rosebrook Road, Asses Ears Road, Wallaby Track, Launderers Track, Hines Track, Syphon Road, back onto Hines Track, Rose Creek Road, Phillips Island Track, Glenelg River Road, Mount Victory Road back into Halls Gap (for those who want to follow on a map). Approx. 110km.*

We set off at the arranged time in beautiful weather, 9 of us following Obee and Dee heading for Roses Gap and then on to the Roses Gap Road to Wartook. This was fairly easy driving however there were numerous calls put out by Obee and Dee to watch out for roos and emus. We nearly took out a small roo that darted across the road and which Ian actually lost sight of under the roo bar, but I did see it hopping into the undergrowth still at a huge speed so all ok. Because of this we

dropped our speed a little and unfortunately lost touch with those in the convoy in front of us for a while. We all caught up by Wartook, which was a very pleasant drive as was Asses Ears Road.



Wallaby Track was a little more challenging with many humps (put there by graders to divert water off the road). Launderers Track was next and we should have expected something a little more difficult as we all had to do a three point turn just to get into it! This track was certainly more challenging and in Chris's opinion was a "moderate" track with some "hard" sections. Our intrepid leaders bottomed out a few hundred meters into the track so the convoy stopped. Obee and Dee were able to reverse and remove the rock that caught them... and then it was on! Several of the group were out of cars helping others through trickier sections, Channel 13 was in constant use and Chris resorted to hand signals to guide my Ian through a section, instructing me on how to signal and what to look for. Still, we all safely navigated the tricky sections including Jeanette in her Rav4 which at one point only had 2 wheels on the ground! We appeared to be through the worst when we lost contact with Tail End Charlie otherwise known as Frank and Pat. Chris headed back to find them also having bottomed out. The use of a jack assisted them in getting mobile again. For only 3km of track, it certainly took us a while to navigate through. We journeyed over Hines Track and onto Lodge Road where we pulled up in the shade and had lunch on the side of the road. We were all pretty hungry by then!



On the road again, we headed back to Hines Track, navigated a brief section of Rose Creek Road, and then onto Philips Island Track before turning left onto the Glenelg River Road. This road afforded some beautiful views (as did most roads and tracks to be honest) of the rugged scenery that makes up the Grampians.

After a very rewarding day, we arrived back into Halls Gap around 16:00. Happy hour was back out at the Plantation Camp Ground at 18:00 where we reviewed the day. Obee at this point decided in

a change in convoy order where less experienced drivers were between more experienced drivers. We agreed to meet in Halls Gap at 09:45 tomorrow for Day 2!

**Drive No. 2: Saturday**

*Mount Victory Road, Glenelg River Road, Moora Track, Glenelg River Road, Serra Road, Henham Track, unnamed track, Serra Road, Grampians Tourist Road, Jimmy Creek Road, Grampians Tourist Road, Serra Road, Henham Track, Serra Road, Grampains Tourist Road back to Halls Gap (for those who want to follow on a map). Approx. 85km.*

Frank and Pat decided to have an easier day today and see some of the tourist spots, so Jim and Margaret volunteered to be Tail End Charlie. Eight of us followed Obee and Dee on another day of dirt roads and tracks. We headed out along Mount Victory Road and the Glenelg River Road, this time turning left onto Moora Track. Obee and Dee, assisted by Ian and Julie, moved a tree trunk off the road to allow us all to pass through to some shady tree lined sections of road, stopping at a particularly nice spot for morning tea and a stretch of the legs.



We turned left at the end of Moora Track, onto another section of the Glenelg River Road before turning left onto Serra Road. Most of the gravel roads in the area were good but because of the dust each of us kicked up we were not going more than about 60kph. The Henham Track turnoff was located and all 9 of us followed this track until we came across a tree that had partially fallen over the road. Care was taken and guidance was provided to allow all of us to get through the gap, with earlier cars assisting those that followed (Anne and Rob pictured below).



The Henham Track has a few right angled bends and at one of these bends, our leaders were confronted with several options to travel with the track to the right being chosen. We weren't sure we were still on the Henham Track but as Chris pointed out "We are the Southern Explorers and we go exploring!" The track was narrower than other tracks we had been on but clearly defined.

There were several creek crossings to traverse, some quite steep on entrance and exit, and the bush land was beautiful. We did add a couple of extra pin stripes to our paintwork, but that is what happens if you want to see more of this big land. Eventually we came out on a dirt road and I suggested and Jim seconded a turn to the left through Teddy Bear Gap (I wonder who named that and why!) and down to Jimmy Creek Camp Ground so we could have a comfort stop and some lunch, which we did in the shade of a large gum tree.

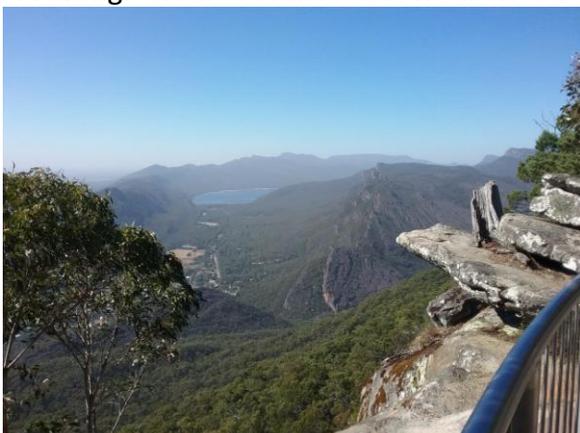


The Henham Track still beckoned so back we went, retracing our travels, under the fallen tree and along the track further than we had got last time, when what do we encounter? A "Road Closed" sign! Certainly not what we expected. Given the narrowness of the road, we all turned around, but headed back to the main road in reverse order, arriving back in Halls Gap around 15:30 stopping at Lake Bellfield for a bit of a debrief before heading back to Halls Gap with some of us taking on more fuel and some of us indulging in a waffle cone ice-cream.

### ***Drive No. 3: Sunday***

*Mount Victory Road, Mt Difficult Road, Old Mill Road, Mt Difficult Road, Rose Creek Road, Lodge Road, Mair Track, Syphon Road, Goat Track, Harrop Track, Red Rock Road, Lodge Road, Glenelg River Road, Mount Victory Road back into Halls Gap. Approx. 100km.*

We met at the group of shops by the (dry) creek bed for a coffee, famous vanilla slice, or other refreshment before heading off on today's drive, which would incorporate some of the more touristy destinations of Boroka Lookout and Mackenzie Falls. Unfortunately the Plantation Camp Ground had attracted a couple of groups of younger tourists who had partied loudly until around 04:00 so those of our group staying there were a little lacking on sleep. We were comforted by the fact that Frank and Pat's generator (as they were having battery problems) would exact some form of revenge on the revelers as it would need to run for a while!



Again we went up the Mount Victory Road, this time turning right onto Mt Difficult Road continuing on to the Boroka Lookout where we stopped and checked out the two viewing platforms. It was a bit of hazy day but the views were still magnificent. Back onto the Mt Difficult Road we retraced our travels until we got to the Old Mill Road which took us past the Smiths Mill Campground (looked nice with a bit of a water channel through it), and onto Mackenzie Falls where some walked to the bottom of the falls and others walked to lookouts above them and to Broken Falls. We all had lunch in a stone hut in the shade as the day was quite warm.

From here we followed the Mt Victory Road to Rose Creek Road, along this road for a while, a quick trip left on to Lodge Road followed by a turn right on to Mair Track. At the end of Mair Track we turned left onto Syphon Road and then several kilometers later we turned right onto Goat Track. This track was a little more challenging and wound its way up some steep hill sides. The bush land was quite thick so there weren't too many vistas to be seen but we did stop at one point to take a photo, with Marc and Sandy remembering they had been here before and took a walk on a headland for a better view, followed by Jim and Margaret.



Back on the road again, we caught up with the rest of the group at a fantastic lookout near Billimina Rock and again at the Buandik Camp Ground for a comfort stop and time to stretch the legs. By this time, we were travelling well in convoy, with each car marking the corner for the next car and mostly each car keeping up with the one in front, although the dust prevented us all travelling too closely together.

We headed back into Halls Gap via Red Rock Road, Lodge Road, Glenelg River Road and Mount Victory road, the latter two of which were becoming very familiar. We headed off to our separate camp grounds before most of us catching up at the Halls Gap Pub for a very nice end of trip meal. Frank and Pat and also Bruce C stayed back at the Plantation Camp Ground for a chat / dinner.

### ***Travelling Home / Onwards***

Many of the group travelled home on Monday after three days of exploring the Grampians. A couple of groups stayed in the area for an extra night or two and we headed, towing the boat, towards the Gippsland Lakes for the next part of our holiday.

We would like to thank Obee and Dee for leading the trip to this beautiful part of Australia, and for guiding us along a number of its many dirt roads and tracks. We would also like to thank all those that came for adding to the adventure – from the quick witted comments on the radio, to hand signals guiding us over rough parts of tracks, to the chats and the friendship at happy hours.

The detail of all the roads traveled is so we can reference back to the maps later for future trips.

Report written by Vanessa.