

Victoria Police 4WD Club 2009 Christmas Break



Location – Dom Dom Saddle in the Black Spur ranges on the Maroondah Hwy Approximately 16 km out of Healesville



(photos from a few years back)

Coordinates are: [37°35'S 145°40'E](#)[37.59°S 145.66°E](#) (fine if you have a GPS)

Forecast – 24° with possible hint of showers, wind 0-5 knots.

Trip Standard – *“This is an easy trip with some low range climbs and descents. Some bog holes may/will be encountered (they were encountered on my last drive there) This will be a good trip for less experience members to practice their 4WD driving skills”.*

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There was movement at the station as the word was passed around that Barb and Ed might finally be on time or was it an errant battery going flat? Someone forgot to set the alarm? Actually, the blame was 30 min to get over the Westgate Bridge then a further 45 to get through the tunnel to the Monash Freeway.

Belting down the Maroondah Highway, we drove through a thriving Healesville but it was only after passing the Maroondah dam we could see the fire damage. What can be seen from the road was nowhere near as bad as Kinglake, but even though there are still a lot of tree ferns standing all forlorn; memory of the burn too deep, others have fronds well on the way to maturity. And the baby mountain ash leaves are starting an overall change to the skyline. That was on the left but on the right the forest floor was nothing but bone dry tinder.

Pulling into the large carpark of the Dom Dom picnic grounds there was a bit of a shock, we had to scrounge around for an empty parking spot but smirking we weren't the last to arrive, Jack was. His beloved brand new Prado didn't have a hope in hell of overtaking EBO, the club's now infamous 60 landcruiser around the hairpin bends. Not only a parking spot, but with the gossip brigade going on, placing of chairs was a bit tight as it was a



very good turnout of members. Pity I didn't count the number of trucks all primed and waiting for a nice amble through the easy rated track. Usually fingers on one hand would suffice, but not this time.



After our monthly club meet and moving the cakes and bickies table to the covered pinewood windbreak that for a change had no mention about Foo or 'who loved who' scratched into the walls, off into the wild dry yonder. Bronco had recently tried out the track so led us on. I'm not sure if that's correct terminology, after 15 minutes there was a pause at a 'T' intersection while team leader assured us his navigator's decision about 'L' or 'R' was coming. Wayne's comment his GPS showed 'R' a dead end so 'L' we went.

Just as Ed warned our first time passenger to keep looking at the road and not identify the emerging local flora, our stronger suspension came into play. "Cor mate, take it easy, I almost knocked me teeth out" was the polite comment. "Told you so" whistled the driver, "now is not the time to try take a drink." I'd say all the visitors became more involved in the track as puddles started growing.



Then came one of the good ones – high and dry to the left or an innocent looking brown pool to the right. Convoy leader Bronco remained clean and went high. 2nd in line Marcus didn't want to have to wash his car so went high for a change. But 3rd in line, new member Craig, revs high and straight through – boom – almost made it – simple snatch out. I'd say he was too busy lining up a runway to hear my comment about having sexy jocks on. To be fair to Craig, I'd estimate he got just over the half way mark. Out came all the cameras but he didn't show his jocks, just rolled up his jeans and climbed over his 1 ton cabin to get his virgin snatch strap from the tool box on the tray. Luck was on his side managing to find his attach hook without falling into the murky muddy water.



Ed, strap at the ready let little old EBO take it on. Even though we're the heaviest of all the vehicles on the trip he made it easily without getting bogged, quite a few eyes almost popped out though as he came through sideways. Rob P was next but the tidal wave when he walloped the water made photos of his truck impossible. Thanks to Craig for lending us his snatch strap. You can tell he hasn't had the pleasure of trying to wash that thing. With the remaining not so beaten up trucks taking the high road, onwards ho, passengers now

definitely alert to all cracks in the track and unconsciously ducking with every whipping from the ferocious Madame Lash bushes on either side, teeth on edge listening to what resembled finger nails down the blackboard.

We were now covered in so much mud the next puddles were nice to rinse the tyres somewhat, but then a definite stop. To us further back that meant 'not good'. From our gentle easy cruise we had changed to our more familiar 4wd low range convoy. Marcus with his Range Rover rear diff locks engaged out in front sussing out the holes whilst the brows of the veterans indicated deep thought. Actually they were working out how to avoid getting their trucks too dirty. Before us was what can be compared to one of those roller coaster rides where you hit the water at the bottom of the ride at 100km/hour. The ruts didn't



look too deep but sides came up to the windows with a car fitting through – just. It wasn't long, but steep and the measuring stick at the bottom went in more than a bit deep.

Down went Marcus, mud up to the windscreen (surprisingly no foul language like on a previous trip) and almost got to the



other side of the water barrier then out came the tree protectors, winch cable and other items. Took a bit but winched himself out easy. On he went to ensure there were no further cliffs and came back.

Conditions must be easing up ahead if he could turn around that quick.

Craig was next, jocks at the ready. Down the slide but only to the same spot Marcus bogged at. His snatch strap had to be used once again, the winch was unavailable as water had penetrated the control box.



Lining up was Ed in EBO, my screaming NO NO NO landing on deaf ears. It was not due to damaging the \$7,500 gearbox repairs just paid after our attempt to cross the Simpson three months earlier, but getting the carpets sodden with mud. Only the bottom of the bull bar got wet though as he shouldered the sidewall. Craig's first attempt at snatching him got him off the wall and rolled into the drink, but the second snatch attempt almost dragged his unladen tray truck back into the mud as EBO wasn't budging. He was just too light to pull our weight but under Marcus and Wayne's strong supervision a few snatches later and a

very wet EBO was crawling out, sucking up the water to expose a rising step towards the end about half a tyre high. No wonder everyone ended up in that spot.



The others found a place to turn around and go back, but one other had a snatch strap at the ready. Rob P was giving it a go explaining he was covered in mud anyway and accompanied with a big scrape (now he knows why veterans don't have ball hitches on their towbars) settled in the same bed as all the others.

That was it. *Looks like time to go back*

We four who continued (we had no choice, we could never have got back up the slope) ended up watching the salads being prepared when the others cruised in, seems the 100 point turns took a little longer than anticipated.

The chicken and salads were absolutely perfect – served with a large dollop of sunshine and dessert comprising of luscious ever fattening stories and strong voting who won 'Man of the Trip'. I deem it a three way tie – Craig and his sexy jocks, Ed's sideways river crossing and Rob's showering with mud all who dare stand within 100 metres.



Definitely 'Men of the Series' go to Bronco and Lorraine M-Z for preparing this lovely day that will generate many a memory, leave a lasting impression on some drivers and let the visitors experience the exhilaration of hopping into those big boys and take on the Aussie bush or explaining why we come back in such a state.

Barbara



Sexy Craig



Surfin' Ed



Rob "the Wallop" P