

The Trak Master



Official Newsletter of the Trakmaster Off-Road Caravan Club Inc.

Registered No A0045000L

December 2013

TRAKMASTER OFF ROAD CARAVAN CLUB

AGM SUNDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2014

The AGM of the club will be held at:

Frankston RSL Club
183 Cranbourne Road
FRANKSTON 3199

Lunch at 12:00-2:30pm

Meeting at 2:30

Closing date for registration (with or without lunch)

17th January 2014.

To register and see further details go to Trakmaster Club website under WHAT'S ON – ALL CLUB EVENTS

TRIPS, TREKS and TOURS

The Club's Trip Coordinator is **John Wright**, contact tripco@y7mail.com

All trips are listed on the Club's website www.trakmasterclub.org.au

Click on **WHAT'S ON – All Club Events**

You are able to see details of the event, spaces available and other participants. Follow the instructions to make a booking.

If you have difficulty logging on: Contact Clive Garaway at webmaster@trakmasterclub.org.au

TRAKMASTER CLUB ADDRESS

The Secretary
Trakmaster Off-Road Caravan Club
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Bayswater Victoria 3153

Email secretary@trakmasterclub.org.au

TRIPS AND GATHERINGS SCHEDULE

Trip Name	When	Location	Numbers	Comments
Annual General Meeting	2 Feb 2014	183 Cranbourne Road, Frankston Vic		Registrations Open. Check website
AGM Accommodation	31 Dec 2103- 3 Jan 2014	Cranbourne South Vic	6 vans	Hosts: John and Tina Minty Fully subscribed
AGM Gathering	1-10 Feb 2014	Mornington Peninsula	60 Vans	5 places remaining – book on website
Parkes Elvis Festival	8- 12 Jan 2014	Greg and Fran Hay property at Parkes NSW	6-8 vans	This is a fun event and a regular on the Trakmaster calendar. Bob and Bev Bokeyar can help with tickets to the events.
Tamworth Country Music Festival	17-26 Jan 2014	Ian and Meg Clarke invite members to stay on their property near Quirindi.	10 vans	Check on the website for this annual event.
Southern Queensland and Hinterland Tour	10-24 Feb 2014	Join Jeff Chisholm on this great trip taking in National Parks and Beaches and some of the best locations in southern QLD	5 vans	Registration now open in website. This is a new trip.
Jeetho Jaunt	Mar 2014	Jeetho, Gippsland en route to the Vic Caravan Show.	16	Trip full with waiting list
East West 2014	1 May 2104	Annual event crossing from Cape Byron NSW to Steep Point, WA.	8	Trip full with a waiting list.
A Trip Around Queensland	8 weeks from 1 May 2014	Special trip led by Ken and Pam Green with preference for new club members	8 vans	3 places left (at 03 Jan 2014). Starts in Texas 1 May and spends several weeks meandering around Queensland via Cameron's Corner, Birdsville, Undarra and more.
2014 Gathering	2-8 April 2014	Quorn, South Australia	Open with 59 vans registered so far.	Use as a part of your 2014 travel. Features include exclusive use of Pitchi Rithch railway one day and possible aerial tours of the Flinders. Check for more details on website

2013 EAST WEST TRIP REPORT

May 1 to July 21 2013

Group 1

Meg and Ian Clarke
Eveline and Ralph Creswell
Marilyn and Murray Davidson (leaders)
John and Marion Dickenson
Jill and Bob Harvey
Lorraine and Paul Knox
Louise and Paddy O'Brien



Our journey from Byron Bay to Steep Point has left us with so many wonderful memories of all the places we visited and the special experiences that came our way each day. We had many great campsites, each with their own unique landscape with all the colour and texture that make different areas of outback Australia so special. A warm and friendly group spirit existed amongst the group which always adds an extra dimension

to outback travel. We enjoyed many yummy meals together and shared what became known as a “Magnum Moment” in some very obscure places. The most expensive magnums were at Ormiston Gorge..... \$5.20 each!!!! At the beginning of each travelling day the friendly voice of Ms de Meanor came over the radio giving us local news and gossip and a “Thought for the Day”. She became a much loved member of the group, even though we hadn’t actually met her or knew much about whom she was or what she looked like. Everyone looked forward to her report each morning and we were delighted when she made a special appearance at our last night together at Tamala Station!!!!

Our travels across NSW started with a detour to some interesting National Parks on the Queensland/NSW border including - Border Ranges, Lamington, Girraween, Bald Rock, Boonoo Boonoo, Kwiambal and Mount Kaputar. Thanks to John and Marion for leading this part of the trip and taking us to these wonderful places and giving everyone the opportunity to get to know each other better and establish the travel routines for the group. We spent a night on the banks of the Gwydir River near Bingara, the site of the infamous 2010 Trakkie floods. Peter Rose (the owner of the property) was in hospital recovering from a broken hip and he was very pleased to see us and reminisce on our 2010 experiences. The highlight of our travels through western NSW was visits to three outback stations (Mt Oxley, Trilby and Reola) which gave us an insight into station life both now and days gone by and the chance to experience some beautiful places and see lots of wildlife, especially the daily pelican parade in front of our camp everyday at Trilby.

After crossing into South Australia at Cameron’s Corner, we joined other Trakkie friends at the 10th Anniversary celebrations at Innamincka. We spent time exploring the local area and enjoyed catching up with everyone. We camped on Coopers Creek near the entry to Coongie Lakes National Park where the bird life is amazing and the shady branches of the river gums provided a pleasant backdrop to our camp. We went prepared with food for a lakeside dinner the afternoon we visited the lakes and we were rewarded with the most colourful and dramatic sunset of the trip. At first we all thought it was going to be very ordinary but then the cloud formations opened up and the sunset show lasted for over an hour.

From Coongie we travelled to Birdsville and then we headed down the Inside Birdsville Track which had just opened after being closed because of floods for the past few years. We camped at Mungarannie and then Muloorina which is just north of Marree. Our travels on the Oodnadatta Track were interrupted for four days by rain and the closing of the road. Luckily we were camped at Beresford Siding when the rain started and the old stone railway building provided us with a room where we could gather and had a lovely open fire to keep warm by and cook meals. It became known as the “Beresford Country Club”. There was more mud than dust as we continued north through William Creek, Oodnadatta, Algabuckina, Eringa Waterhole and onto Mt Dare. The dust returned with vengeance as we headed toward Old Andado on the northern boundary of the Simpson Desert where the red sand hills were the backdrop to some amazing scenery. Molly Clarke, who passed away last year at the age of 89, had lived in the little corrugated iron cottage at Old Andado for many years and it remains open for all to visit just as she left it. It is an amazing living memorial to Molly and her husband Mac who were pioneers in this area. [Editor Note: If you are interested in Old Andado you might like this site:

<http://www.oldandado.com/in-memory-of-molly-clark/>]

From Andado we headed into Alice Springs where we spent a few days reconnecting with the outside world, restocking the food cupboards and getting some broken fridges seen to.

The next few days were spent in the West MacDonnell Ranges where we really enjoyed the special features of the many gorges whose colours and rock formations were at their best under the full midday sun. We also experienced the special atmosphere created by a full moon in an outback setting at our campsites in this area as well as enjoying the company of Trakkie friends David and Ruth Deahl. The Mereenie Loop did not live up to the many critical reports we had heard about it and we had no trouble travelling through to Kings Canyon where we enjoyed the morning climbing the canyon and marvelling at the majesty and enormity of the cliff faces just as we did when we walked around the base of Uluru a few days later.

We were then all excited about moving on to the next stage of the journey which took us into Western Australia along the Great Central Road which is one of the links that connects the eastern states to the west and allows adventurous travellers to experience its wonderful outback scenery and get an insight into the aboriginal art world at the gallery at Warburton. When we arrived at Laverton we made arrangements to visit David and Jenny Thomas at their camp at Hawk Nest where David gave us a lesson on how to go gold detecting. Our travels through Western Australia included visits to Niagara Dam, the sculptures at Lake Ballard, the miners' mess at Leinster, Walga Rock (west of Cue), Boogardie Station and Kalbarri where we saw the ocean for the first time in almost three months. On arrival at Tamala Station we were met by the 2nd East West group. We decided we would travel to Steep Point on the same day to finish the trip as a group.

Our journey from the most easterly point to the most westerly point took 12 weeks and almost 12000 km and has been one of the most rewarding travelling experiences that Marilyn and I have had. I thank our travelling companions for their friendship, knowledge and sense of humour which in all has made a very memorable trip for everyone.

Murray Davidson

Simpson Desert Trip - June 2013 - Trip Report

Twelve vans departed the Innamincka Gathering half a day earlier than planned to avoid the threat of rain. In the end that proved to be unnecessary, however, all participants were buoyed with anticipation and were ready to "get on with it".

After two days of travel via Haddon's Corner and camping at "those" excellent gravel scrape camp sites, that appear to be on most outback roads, we arrived in Birdsville, that iconic outback town on the eastern edge of the Simpson Desert.

There was much discussion and anticipation about this thing, BIG RED. Was it one of those lollies being handed around, the wine on offer at the Birdsville Pub or a huge pile of sand a

few kilometres out of town and our first obstacle on the desert crossing? In the end all three proved to be correct.

After a rest day at Birdsville and leaving the vans at the caravan park we headed west, Big Red for morning tea (not the wine) then into the Simpson Desert National Park and beyond.

We passed briefly into Northern Territory, back into Queensland and on into South Australia crossing more than 1000 sand dunes. I think we lost count after 1049. We travelled in two groups on the track to avoid any congestion and to deal with any difficulties getting over the dunes more easily. This approach proved to be very successful and the whole group re joined as one each night and sometimes during the day depending how we were travelling.

We passed through Poepel Corner, Purni Bore, Dalhousie Springs (for a swim), 3 O'clock Creek and on to Mt Dare Station, mainly following the French Line which is the track constructed by the French Company that was conducting seismic exploration during the 1960's.

After a rest day at the station we turned around and did it again, this time via the Rig Road, another route created also by the French exploration company.

We all arrived back in Birdsville ten days later, all in very high spirits after achieving our collective goal and also our personal goals (all different). The camping proved to be a bit difficult at first for most, however, we all managed to get into the swing of things pretty fast. We were, however, all glad to get back to our Trakkies. There were a couple heard to say that they had trouble sleeping for the first few nights after returning to the vans.

The trip was very successful from a serious 4x4 driving point of view, amazing scenery, excellent socially (thanks to those who organised the various games during the day, quiz at night around the camp fire and the rest). All cars and drivers performed well with only 2 snatch strap incidents and a handful of second tries at steeper hills. We had to repair a leaking radiator, deal with a leaking fuel tank, a failed Engel, an almost dead shock absorber and an almost dead CV joint. But, no tyre problems! Despite all that, all returned to Birdsville under their own steam and in good spirits.

A BIG thanks to all participants for their enthusiasm and participation in contributing to a very enjoyable couple of weeks. A special thanks to Barry and Keiran for taking over leadership of the second group on the track.



The touring party, gazing westwards towards Big Red: and close to a pub as usual for a Trakmaster group

Kevin & Linda Thiele (Leader and Trip Reporter)
John & Jean Shelley
Barry and Keiran Challenger
revor & Lorraine Thiele
Gary & Cheryl Coad
Charlie & Bron Thomas
Dennis & Lee Dorman
Geoff & Sue Tunstall

Andrew & Trish Kilpatrick
Paul & Mara Walsh
Frank & Heather McConchie

Western Australia Wildflowers Gathering

August 21 - September 2 2013

Organisers **Bill and Julie Martin**
 Peter and Barbara Browne
Location **Lochada Station (40 kms east of Morawa)**
Participants **22 vans**

Lochada Station provided a great setting for the gathering with its high rocky knob and mulga bushland for as far as you could see. Lochada and its neighbouring station Kadji Kadji had been run by Glenda and Jim Milloy for many years until they sold the leases back to the WA government and it is now a conservation area.

The organisers of the gathering had both lived in the area at some stage- Peter as deputy principal at Morawa High School and Bill as bank manager in the neighbouring town Perenjori. They each knew the local area well and had many contacts to call on to help get things organised. We thank them for their efforts in organising a great gathering.

Unfortunately the display of wildflowers was not up to its normal standard this year but we were all still very happy with the variety of what we saw, especially the amazing wreath flowers Bill and Julie took us to see on the Thursday. They only grow on the gravel shoulder of a road and from year to year the locals don't know exactly where they will appear.

A visit to Morawa and the local Agricultural College was the highlight of Friday. The College was started by the local community in the 1960's and provides agricultural courses for students in Years 10,11 and 12, many of whom board at the college. The college runs as a fully operational farming enterprise growing cereal crops and raising beef cattle, sheep and pigs. They have excellent facilities and students spend their time in and out of the classroom being fully involved in all the farm work. The College is linked to a number of other similar colleges in WA and they all provide a unique form of education to country students. As an alternative to the college visit a small group visited Karara, the local iron ore mine which has seen a huge amount of infrastructure development (railway line, water supply and overhead power supply) go through the area. The mine is located about 20 kms east of Lochada and has a large FIFO workforce. The iron ore is taken by rail to Geraldton and shipped to China.

On Saturday Glenda and Jim Milloy picked us up in the local "wildflower bus" and gave us a very interesting tour of Kadji Kadji Station which was their home for 30 years. That night we enjoyed a meal together around the campfire and Jim gave us a talk about the history of the stations and the wider area. We were then entertained by Don playing the squeeze box and there was much toe tapping and enjoyment of many old favourites. A quiet day on Sunday gave everyone the chance to relax and catch up with friends. Thanks to everyone for supporting this first and very successful gathering in WA.

Murray and Marilyn Davidson



Wreath Flowers



L to R Bill Martin, Glenda and Jim Milloy and Julie Martin

ROCK WALLABY TOUR

September 2-7 2013

Touring Party

Marilyn and Murray Davidson

Heather and Bruce Mann

Julie and Bill Martin and Pippa the dog (leaders)

Sandra and Richard Payne

Linda and Kevin Thiele

After a very pleasant few days camped at Lochada Station we set off on Monday morning (Sept 2) to explore parts of the North Eastern wheat belt of Western Australia, with a particular focus on the amazing rocks that are dotted around the area. As we were travelling south toward Perenjori, a familiar voice (Gowan Cooke) came on the radio referring to us as the “rock wallabies” so that’s what the group was dubbed for the week.

Julie and Bill were fantastic leaders and all we had to do was sit back, relax and enjoy the scenery and the company. We visited 8 different rocks during the week.

Monday 2 September Billiburning (north of Beacon) *

Tuesday Beringbooding Rock and Elachbutting Rock * (east of Bonnie Rock)

Wednesday Baladjie Rock (east of Bullfinch) Karalee Rock * (east of Southern Cross)

Thursday Boorabbin Rock (west of Coolgardie), Burra Rock (south of Coolgardie)

Cave Hill *

(*Campsites)

Each rock had its own unique setting but they all were accessible, quite easy to climb, had some lovely wild flowers and shrubs and had interesting ways devised by early settlers of channelling water into storage dams or tanks. Most had a number of caves that could be explored and great views from the top of the surrounding wheat farms. The rocks we camped at had good, basic camping facilities with each rock providing a great natural backdrop to our camps.

Our last day was spent at Cave Hill which was probably the biggest and most interesting of all the rocks. We shared a lovely community meal together that night in a beautiful bush setting under a lovely starry sky. Luckily the raindrops we woke up to the next morning didn’t arrive earlier. We all went our separate ways on

Saturday morning, leaving Julie and Bill to enjoy another relaxing day at the lovely campsite. A big thankyou to them both for sharing this wonderful part of Western Australia with us all and being such great trip leaders.

Marilyn and Murray Davidson



The group enjoys the campfire at Cave Hill

East West Group 2 Report



Eight intrepid “Trakkie” couples, three from Queensland, two from Victoria, one from N.S.W., one from A.C.T. and one from Tasmania, comprised the East-West Group 2. Our leaders, Ken and Betty TARLINTON, together with assistant leaders & TEC, Gowan and Judy COOKE had prepared an itinerary that would be an adventure that would provide unforgettable memories.

I have put together some of our group’s special locations and memories (not in any specific order), but it was a difficult task to not include more.

At **Brewarrina**, we visited the **Aboriginal Fish Traps**. Known in the local “[Aboriginal language](#)” as Biami's Ngunnhu. It is believed that local aboriginal people have shared and maintained the traps for thousands of years. The traps are believed to be at least 40,000 years old, possibly the oldest surviving human-made structure in the world. Consisting of river stones arranged to form small channels, the traps directed fish into small areas from which they could be readily plucked. The traps form a complex net of linked weirs and ponds along 500 metres of the river. The area is “Australian Heritage Listed”.



Ready for “takeoff” on old airport strip at Casino



Frost & mist camping at Bingara. Let’s hear it for “diesel” heaters, or at least



“Aboriginal Fish Traps” at Brewarrina

Caravan Park

those of us lucky enough to
have them.

The group was lucky to be able to travel on the **“Inner” Birdsville Track**, which is usually closed due to the fact it traverses a “clay pan and flood plain”. The slightest bit of moisture and you could be stuck for months with no hope of recovery except by chopper. We had dry conditions all the way! At least for that bit of the trip.

We encountered **wet weather** which delayed our travels on two occasions. **First was in Bourke**. Our original stay of two days turned into four as rain forced the closure of our outback route west. By day three we visited Bourke and joined the locals at their “Biggest morning tea” in the CWA rooms in Stewart Street raising money for cancer research. Fantastic morning, well done ladies and gentlemen of Bourke. As time was slipping away and we needed to be in Innamincka in three days, we reluctantly headed north on the bitumen highway. We didn’t strike dirt roads till we crossed the South Australia border near Innamincka. At last we felt like we were on an adventure!!

Our second **wet weather** adventure was driving from Mungerannie Pub on the Birdsville track towards Marree. We encountered torrential rain dropping 22mms for the day. As we were driving towards **Cooper Creek** we were sliding all over the road, cars going one way with caravans going in the opposite directions. We eventually made it to the south side of Cooper Creek & higher ground. Gum boots were the order of the day. By now the road had officially been “closed”, but as we were part way along the track we could complete our trek. Next day waiting till the afternoon to allow the track to “dry” somewhat, we made a “dash” for **Marree**.



Cooper Creek campsite.



Making our own fun at Cooper Creek. “Is there a way out of here?”



Waiting for the roads to open at Marree

We spent **four long days in Marree** waiting for the rain to stop and roads to dry out. “Are we staying or are we moving today” became a part of our morning greeting. It was hard to get any accurate information on the state of the roads and this time there was no sealed road alternative.

From here, we had overnight camps at **Beresford Siding, Algebuckina Bridge, Pedirka, and Engoordina Siding**. We stopped to examine some of the derelict railway sidings and ruins along the way. As we gazed in to the flames of the nightly campfire we mused on life as it might have been in the days when the railway was operating. We imagined the cookhouse, marvelled at the engineering of the water towers, wondered about the pre formed concrete

construction, and shook our heads in disgust at the disfiguring graffiti and vandalism. Around the sites there were a few bits and pieces of the flotsam and jetsam of life on the Old Ghan railway; what there was had been well picked over. There were few reminders of the old telegraph line which had originally linked the southern part of the country with the rest of the world.



Beresford Siding, Railway Building.



Algebuckina Bridge, the disused rail bridge has the longest span of any train bridge in SA



Engoordina Siding

The first stage of the Oodnadatta Track was relatively smooth going but once we left Oodnadatta the situation changed. We then had four days of bone shaking, teeth rattling travel over very rough corrugated and bumpy roads. The tool boxes were rearranged and the cutlery drawers a congested mess of stainless steel. Here we encountered our most challenging and probably most unforgettable part of our journey travelling to **Dalhousie Springs** and back to **Mt Dare Roadhouse**. We then thought the worst was behind us. Little did we know more was to come, we had **the route of “the old Ghan Railway” track**. It runs parallel with the “Finke to Alice Springs” racetrack which had only recently hosted this annual event. The travelling was extremely slow. At one stage, **we travelled 80 kms in 4 hours**. We crawled our way towards Maryvale Station and Chambers Pillar. Two refrigerators were the main casualties of this part of the trip; this was bad news for their owners. In hindsight, many more things could have rattled apart or broken down if we had chosen to travel more quickly and not reduced our tyre pressures. It was an adventure and experience to savour.



The racetrack at Finke, NT, runs parallel to the “Old Ghan Railway” track.



Chambers Pillar, towers 50 metres above the surrounding plain.

Another highlight was the trip to **Chambers Pillar Historical Reserve** and experiencing the grandeur of its truly outstanding geographical and historical features. Until the coming of

the railway in the 1920s, the Pillar was a landmark in the desert on the long overland journey from Adelaide to Alice Springs. Many of those early travellers have left a record of their visit in the soft, white sandstone, including John Ross and Alfred Giles in 1870. We stayed at Maryvale Station overnight, at NO cost, and were able to leave our caravans in the station while we travelled to Chambers Pillar.

Witjira N P visiting Dalhousie Station Ruins then Dalhousie Springs. This South Australian Park has an open aquifer slightly bigger than an Olympic Pool. Temperature was 38C for those who wished to swim. The camping sites are large with bore water available, cold showers & “bush” toilets. There is a tank with some rain water. A fantastic park to visit if you are prepared to tackle the track to get there.

The amazing scenery of the **East & West Mac Donnell Ranges**, with their many spectacular gaps and gorges. Driving through the **Larapinta Trail** and stopping for walks, notably **Kings Canyon walks**, some members walking the “Rim Walk” while others enjoyed the “Garden of Eden” or “Floor walk”.

We crossed into Western Australia, some of us for the first time on “**The Great Central Road**”, while others for a return visit. We were amazed at the width and quality of this outback “highway”. We were able to bush camp amidst sand dunes and numerous “breakaways”.



Len Beadell's Marker & Plaque



Giles Meteorological station, Len Beadell's Grader

One of the goals was to find a plaque that commemorated the construction of central desert roads by a modern day **explorer/surveyor Len Beadell**. There was supposedly a plaque embedded in a gum tree along the side of the road; it was missing but one of our intrepid trip planners was sure there was one to find along the track; he had noted it in his research notes during planning for this trip. Perseverance and attention to the GPS reading paid off and we found the marker on a side track to the south of the main road. We duly took photographs and noted the text of the plaque, which was a replica placed there in 2000, the details were stamped into a piece of aluminium which was then mounted on a white post. Later that day we visited Giles Meteorological station. Although organised tours were no longer available, there was a visitor's centre and information boards around which

gave us the chance to learn more. The site for this facility was selected by Len Beadell in 1955; it is now Australia's most remote mainland weather station. Within the historical area were murals and pictures painted by Len Beadell depicting a humorous take on life at the weather station and surrounding area. The grader that was used during his road making is now on display in a huge protective cage along with original signage and pictures of that time. It is small and somewhat primitive piece of machinery in comparison with some of the equipment used today. However, there is absolutely no doubt about the wonders this machine achieved while partnering with the intrepid explorer Len Beadell. In his search for, and construction of, suitable sites for the testing of atomic bombs and rockets, he created a network of tracks opening up the centre of this huge continent. It is thanks to his pioneering and dedication that the way was forged to provide a comfortable travel route for those like us who go on these remote adventures.

Finally, we arrived at **Tamala Station** for our last group camp. Tamala is an active pastoral station and part of the **Shark Bay World Heritage Area**. We camped at "Huts" area with water views and some dipping their fishing rods with little success. From here we did our final destination 4wd to **Steep Point**, blessed with beautiful sunny weather and little wind. We were able to watch whales, dolphins and a tortoise swimming in the waters off Steep Point and Thunder Bay Blowholes. We had the company of **East-West Group One** during our stay at Tamala Station and they visited Steep Point on the same day as us. It was a chance to share tales of our travels and catch up with "Trakkie friends".



Our Group:

Back Row (L-R): Gowan Cooke, Des Butt, Lynn Albury-Farrelly, Terry Farrelly, Colin Donald, Noeline Donald, Vicki Embleton, Barry Embleton, Arthur Hinder, Richard Payne & Sandra Payne.

Front Row (L-R): Mary Butt, Judy Cooke, Betty Tarlinton, Ken Tarlinton & Dianne Hinder.

Along our journey we had two "broken caravan fridges", one smashed rear car window (this highlighted the importance of protecting your window when you're travelling off road tracks), several tyre punctures, one set of car shock absorbers needed replacing, UHF radio transmission issues (two members replaced their radios) and one broken wheel stud. Fortunately no health issues for our "First Aid Officer", Mary and her assistant, Gowan. Noeline and Colin had a large piece of cardboard which became our "under car repair mat". It travelled in their back seat and was constantly in use. Regular maintenance and checking became a daily chore when we stopped each day.

Our group had achieved our goal and joined the club of “Trakkies who have done East-West”. After 9 ½ weeks and some 9,300kms we had formed friendships that will extend to the future. As expressed by one couple: A final highlight has been the happiness of the whole EW2 group and the commitment from everyone to “make it work”. Lastly, we would like to express our sincere thanks to Ken & Betty and Gowan & Judy for jointly “leading” the trip.

INNAMINCKA GATHERING

The Innamincka Gathering in May was conceived as a special event to mark the 10th Anniversary of the Trakmaster Off Road Caravan Club. It was initially conceived as a fairly low key event that might be incorporated into the annual travel plans of members who were touring from East to West or on other epics. About sixty caravans finally made it. We camped on the Town Common and much time was spent chatting and meeting new people, comparing rigs and gadgets.

As many of you know, Innamincka is one of the most remote small towns in Australia. It is 1065 km northeast of Adelaide and 459 km from Lyndhurst up the Strzelecki Track. It is situated on the banks of Cooper Creek in the legendary Channel Country, and surrounded by the Strzelecki, Tirari and Sturt Stony Deserts, within Innamincka Regional Reserve. Charles Sturt was probably the first European to visit Innamincka in 1845, followed by other explorers including Gregory in 1858 and Burke and Wills in 1860-61. The first police station was established in 1882, when it was still called Hopetoun. It became Innamincka in 1890, a year after the first fortnightly mail coach service was established. At the 2006 census, Innamincka had a population of 131 although these days the population of the settlement proper is more like 15. It is a regular calling in point for Trakmaster expeditions and an ideal spot for a gathering.

The road to Innamincka got off to a rocky – or should that be a soggy – start. Rain in the area closed dirt roads, so people had to wait in Broken Hill, Lyndhurst, Burra and Bourke. Most were able to make it by Sunday. Murray’s East West Crossing was stranded at Tilpa and was not able to arrive until Tuesday. The result of these strandings was that most had met up in groups and travelled together when the roads opened.

In addition to the daily chatting and relaxation there was a program of activities and some spontaneously arranged event. There were several tag-alongs or individuals went to the surrounding sights. Coongie Lakes, with its amazing bird life and abundant and recently refreshed river red gums, was very popular as the road has been closed by water for quite a few years. The historic Dig Tree and Policeman’s Waterhole were also popular destinations.

Some went to the cemetery and the airstrip complete with crashed plane. Story is it crashed, the occupants walked away, bought a car from a local and quickly left town!

There were small group tours of the Geodynamics experimental energy facility. On with the hard hats for an interesting tour of Innamincka's hot rocks. Geo-thermal energy is being generated by fracking the granite up to four kilometres below the surface.

Each night there was happy hour around the communal fire. The club paid the Progress Association for a load of wood which was very welcome.

The pub did good meals so at lunchtime and most nights there were groups of people who enjoyed their hospitality and a night off from cooking. Reading the pub walls also filled in a lot of time.

The big presentation night was at the pub, where they did a tremendous meal for 120 people. There were recollections from founding members and there was also a showing of the DVD of the play "Dimboola" as performed by Trakmaster members at the annual gathering. It was on the Big Screen – outdoors. Hilarious.

When it was time to go, groups and individuals headed off, a lot going north but some heading for home. The two East West Crossings continued on their way. Some took the opportunity to use Walkers Crossing which has been closed for several years due to flooding.

The club owes special thanks to **Jacki Harris from BioMagic**, one of the Club's most stalwart sponsors and supporters. On this occasion, when the original arrangements for black water management and the supply of fresh water broke down, Jackie jumped in and supplied, at no cost to the Club, a 1000 litre black water treatment tank and as well a 1350 litre fresh water tote tank, which she delivered from Brisbane. On the way Jackie damaged her new van and had to stay in the (not cheap) Innamincka Motel. Jackie also provided grey water treatment packages to every attendee; all filters for filtering the Cooper Creek water; tested and replaced filters on a daily basis. Jackie has also provided the Club with a set of filters for future events of this nature. Jackie's generous support was critical to the success of the gathering and proved the value of her products.

Credit must also be given to organisers Don and Marg Buckmaster and John and Irene Wright, who undertook an epic journey from Melbourne to Broken Hill, diverted through Cobar, Bourke and on to Cunnamulla then to Innamincka – a great effort just to get the gathering underway. Thanks to Don and Marg, John and Irene for all the forward planning and organisation. Thanks to all the other helpers also. It was a great gathering.

Bron Ingle



Coongee Bocce Group solving the problems of the World.

TIPPLERS' TRIP REPORT

18 vans attended beautiful Maygar's Hill Winery, Old Longwood for the kick-off to the Tipplers' Trip. The vans were set up throughout the picturesque vineyard grounds and Trakkie Central was the winery itself.



Our host, Jenny Houghton, received a call on the Friday afternoon to say she had won a Gold Medal at the Victorian Wine Show for her 2012 Shiraz. Needless to say, there were plenty of willing Tipplers on hand to help her celebrate by sampling this and her other great wines!

Saturday morning dawned bright and sunny, and several Tipplers headed to Ruffy Produce Store for brekky. Another group attended a fascinating talk by Jenny's partner, Ian Dickson, on the production of bio-fuel, which he uses to run his VW van. Ian grows Indian Mustard seed and demonstrated the bio-fuel production process to us. About 20 Tipplers strolled across the paddocks to Ian's shed to watch the demo. The 'shed' is rather impressive, containing lots of toys.. classic cars, a pristine 1967 Piper Cherokee 4-seater aircraft and the farm machinery.

Another relaxing afternoon was followed by BYO dinner at the winery and a very entertaining talk by Jenny. The Club presented Jenny and Ian with a Certificate of Appreciation. The wine and conversation flowed and a great time was had by all.

On Sunday morning, everyone headed to Mansfield for supplies before heading to Merrijig and into Sheeppark Flat. Several went via David and Jenny Thomas's property at Strathbogie and others via Merton.

Another 4 Trakkies joined us and we set up camp beside the Howqua River, in a grassy valley amongst huge mountain ash trees. It is a spectacular place and we had it almost to ourselves.



Everyone gathered each afternoon around the large fire pit, which became Trakkie Central.



Conversation and wine flowing at Trakkie Central.

A large group enjoyed a leisurely walk to nearby Fry's Flat on Monday morning. Fry's Hut is one of the best examples of a cattleman's hut and was occupied by Fred Fry until the mid-70's. The Howqua is a very good trout-fishing river and although we didn't see too many fish, a few Trakkies tried their luck at fly-fishing.

Murray and Marilyn led a full-day drive to Bluff Hut, Bindaree Falls and Craig's Hut on Tuesday and everyone had a great day. The weather was beautiful once again.

On Wednesday, most of the group enjoyed lunch at Delatite Winery. Thanks to David and Ruth Deahl for organising this.

Barry and Keran Challenger organised a 12-k return walk from Eight Mile campground to Ritchies Hut and back along the Howqua River on Thursday morning. 9 walkers attended and enjoyed more beautiful scenery.

The afternoon was spent preparing for the evening's festivities. Everyone had been split into dinner groups and each group had prepared a feast. Although the weather was cool and showery, it didn't dampen enthusiasm and the aromas wafting around the camp were mouth-watering. It was a great night and a terrific way to meet new people.



The King Parrots of Sheeppark Flat made themselves at home amongst the vans during the week and most people had pet parrots climbing over them or their awnings.

Thanks to everyone who attended for making this week such a great time. I think everyone headed off on Friday morning feeling very relaxed. This may become an annual event.....

Kerry Holgate

Ulupna Island, December 2013



Our hosts, Lindsay Elf and Anne Elfette

It was billed as a very relaxing gathering to Ulupna Island on the Murray in Victoria “before the rush of Christmas” and promised bike riding, legal cod fishing, koala watching and just hanging. Pet reindeer were welcome. Planning and execution was ably led by Lindsay and Anne Morris.

Some participants arrived on the Tuesday to secure a suitable spot for 30 vans. The rest began to arrive the next day. The gathering of members, new and old, on the mighty Murray River was started with a welcome BBQ around the obligatory camp fire where many yarns were swapped.



Assume the circle position

The quiet nights were only disturbed by the grunting koalas in the trees or was it the proverbial drop bears that we had heard?

Entertainment on one night was by The Three Fairies with their rendition of 'Under the Boardwalk '.



You would not want to be caught under the boardwalk with this trio.

Our minds were suitably expanded on another occasion with some useless trivia information by Professor of Bugology, “ Sir John Bugoff ” and his 'Bugology' quiz and scavenger hunt.

The highlight of the event, however, was the Black Friday Christmas feast with groups decorating their tables and getting into the festive spirit by dressing appropriately. We were visited by elves, angels, reindeers, the wise men, and even Mary and Joseph made an appearance, as well as a visit from the big jovial man himself, Santa with Mrs Claus.



Santa had numerous helpers

Leisure activities on sun drenched days were pursued during the course of the week and included fishing, reading, boating, and talking under the gum trees



playing shuffle tree in search of shade, show and tell of each other's vans and some site seeing of the local area. Night time activities included quizzes and games like Bocce and Clop. The farmers markets at Koomooroo on Saturday morning was a magnet for some enthusiasts and on occasion, the bakery and cafe in Strathmerton were utilized for a caffeine fix in the tradition of Trakmaster Club supporting anything that remotely looks like a bakery with coffee.

It is amazing how fast a few days fly when you are flat out doing nothing! Everyone left with a sense that their lives were going to become a little more hectic with Christmas fast approaching.

Our thanks to Lindsay and Ann for their planning and organisation for what is fast becoming one of the "must do" trips on the Trakmaster Club program.

Sandra Payne



Was that a drop bear I heard?



A lazy arvo on the Mighty Murray

Low Impact Camping

As part of its philosophy of being a responsible organisation, The Trakmaster Caravan Club encourages its members to follow the principles of low impact camping when travelling, to minimise the effects we may have on our environment and maintain the balance between conservation and recreation. This is an extract of the Club's Low Impact Camping Statement, which can be seen in full on the club website.

CAMPFIRES

Campfires are a big part of the way we travel but we need to follow some basic rules before lighting a fire.

- Observe local fire regulations
- If there is a fireplace provided, use it!
- Use a trench fire in preference to a fire on the ground's surface.
- Ensure the fire is contained.
- The fire needs to be clear of over-hanging trees and should have a 3 metre clearance of any flammable material.
- Keep your campfire small - enough to cater for cooking and warmth.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Extinguish your fire at night.
- A fire extinguisher or water should be readily accessible.
- Fires need to be thoroughly extinguished prior to leaving the campsite and the trench refilled.
- Try to leave campsites better than you found them by dismantling unnecessary or unsafe fireplaces.

WASTE

- If no bins are provided take your rubbish with you – perhaps even pick up what others have left behind.
- Detergents, toothpaste and soap harm fish and other aquatic life. Wash at least 60 metres away from streams and lakes.
- Scatter grey water so it filters through the soil.

- If you need to bury your human waste, it should be disposed of in a hole at least 30cm deep at least 100 metres from water sources. Cover and disguise the hole with natural materials. It is recommended to burn or take your used toilet paper with you.

BE CONSIDERATE

- Keep noise to a minimum, especially in the early morning and evening.
- Be considerate of other campers' privacy, keep your distance and avoid travelling through their campsites.
- Leave gates as you find them.
- If crossing private property, be sure to ask permission from the landowner(s).

FURTHER INFORMATION

More information about how you can help our environment and minimise the effects of camping can be found at...

CMCA Bush Camping Code <http://www.cmca.net.au>

Tread Lightly! On land and water® <http://treadlightly.org>

CLUB RULES _____ May be downloaded from the Home Page of the club website

MEMBERSHIP LIST _____ May be obtained by emailing the request to the Secretary

While email is preferred, members without email can request a printed copy of club rules or membership list by writing to the club mailing address

CLUB CLOTH BADGES Available for \$7 from Anne Morris PO Box 575 KYABRAM Vic 3619

or email to wirander@bigpond.com

The Trak Master does not necessarily represent the view of either The Trakmaster Off-Road Caravan Club Inc. or Trakmaster Pty Ltd, nor does it purport to offer expert advice except where specifically identified as such.
Articles from club members are welcome and should be sent directly to the editor, via email if possible. The editor reserves the right to edit, reject or modify articles submitted for publication
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