

## An incredible trek with 4-WD

Story by John Parry, Pictures by Vince Calati  
From the 'Weekly Times', December 27 1978

We were on to the third last river crossing when the headlights went under and we lost sight of the far bank. The conversation died. It had been like that all day and by nightfall it didn't really matter if we stopped mid-steam or not. In eight hours we had covered a mere 12 km and had de-bogged ourselves and others so many times we could do it blindfolded. What started it all was a plan to take five Leyland vehicles on a three day trip through central Gippsland – from Licola up the Caledonia River to Butcher Country, then across the Snowy Plains and back via the Wonnangatta River and Dargo.



At rest in Butcher Country – a rare belt of timbered and lightly grassed sub-alpine woodland perched on a ridge between the Macalister and Caledonia Rivers.



Camped on the Caledonia River. At first it looked like an army on manoeuvre. Dinner that night was marinated fillet steak with a choice of French or English mustard.

The area is crisscrossed with four-wheel-drive tracks and fire trails in various stages of dis-repair. Winter had been abnormally wet and the rivers were well up.

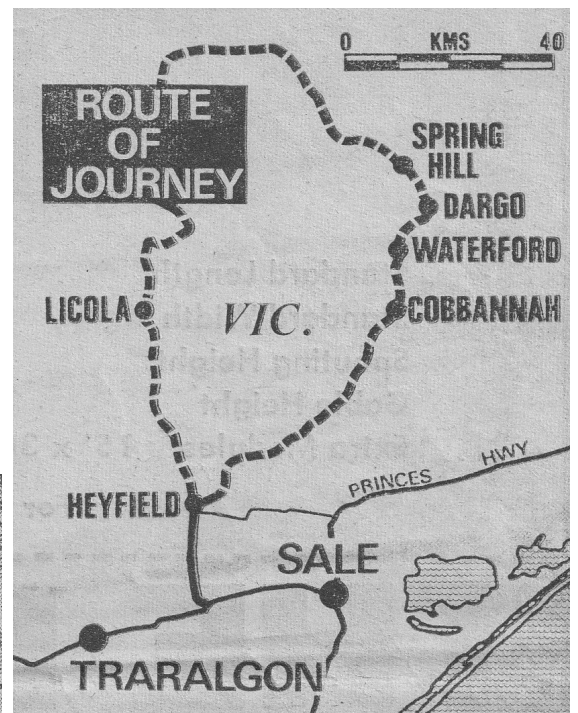
On test were a turbo-charged Land Rover "Game", an automatic Range Rover, two forward control "101" Land Rovers and a prototype forward control Land Rover with its own powered trailer.

None of the vehicles had been in the bush before. All were unknown quantities, particularly the turbo Game and the auto Range Rover.

Starting time was early one December Friday outside Leyland's head office in Melbourne.

Lined up the convoy resembled a small army waiting for a war to pass by. The listed equipment was impressive. It included salvage gear, 100 gallons of extra fuel, a two-way radio and even a refrigerator. But it was not until I was introduced to the chef, that I realised this group was used to roughing it in style.

My involvement followed an invitation to a "quiet weekend in the bush" from Leyland's eastern zone manager for Victoria, Owen Peake – a large, friendly character who thinks he can drive a turbo Land Rover as well as he flies aircraft.



The turbocharged Land Rover could not be faulted. No lag or sudden surge, just plenty of power when needed.

His colleague, Leyland's truck and four-wheel-drive service engineer, Fred Waniczek, came along to keep a critical eye on the \$1300 turbo conversion and to act as general trouble shooter. He needn't have bothered with the turbo. All it needed at the finish was a new shim in the gearbox.

These two also happen to be on more than speaking terms with another large and equally amicable chap called John Ayer, the man behind ULR Sales and Service and part owner of Leycentre Pty. Ltd. Being the patient and civilised fellow he is, John Ayer also has a liking for anything British, particularly if it's British Leyland and he can tinker with it. He did, for example, build the automatic Range Rover, which he will do for anyone with a Range Rover and \$2900 to spare.

The automatic stole the show. It performed as well, and in some cases better than others and did it with a lot less strain on its occupants.

His pride and joy though, is the six-wheel-drive



NO, it didn't stop. The "Toorak tractor" did it all in style, although it was towed through the last 5ft deep crossing on a winch cable.



Uncrowned "hero" of the trip was the guide, Peter "if it won't go give it more revs" Fischer, once proud owner of this highly modified V8 Land Rover. Peter has since done the right thing and buried the old girl.



If the demand is there, these military type forward-control Land Rovers may be imported for around \$21,000 each.

Land Rover trailer combination – built as a prototype by British Leyland for the Australian army and since discarded.

The monster may not have won many wars, but judging by its ability to swim two metres deep rivers, and yaw and claw its way over mountains and through bogs like an antediluvian crab, it has to have some commercial use – even carting water into bushfires.

John propels the rig over unbelievable terrain with a flair belying its bulk. All up the truck and trailer weighs six tonnes. Power comes from a 200 hp Leyland 4.4 litre V8 truck engine, replacing the original Falcon six fitted in the UK by Rover at the request of the Australian army.

An early Range Rover transmission is fitted with a diff lock, over-drive and 12,000 lb hydraulic winch. Cruising speed is 110 kmh, it has a fuel capacity of 300 litres and will average 25 litres every 100 km (11 mpg).

The two 101s (named after their wheelbase) are from a line of standard production military vehicles built by Rover for the British army. They found their way to Australia and are now in the hands of Preston publican, Lou Steinfort, and Dandenong anaesthetist, Dr George Tippett.

Leyland Australia is considering importing the vehicles for sale at around \$21,000 if there is a demand.

They have a one tonne payload and use the conventional Range Rover drive train – 3.5 litre V8 driving through full time four-



wheel-drive with a diff lock and overdrive.

The 101s are fully waterproofed and can remain submerged for at least an hour.

Once the forward control driving layout is mastered they can be placed accurately on narrow tracks and have the advantage of very little overhang front and rear.

However they do need to be loaded to realise their full climbing potential and any extra weight over the front axle, such as a bull bar, is an advantage.

One of the 101s gave us our only real problem for the three days. It blew a fuse on the second day and because of the complex electrical system – 24 volt with 12 volt start – the fault could not be traced without a factory manual. It had to be towed out by the truck-trailer and occasionally winched by the Range Rover.



The automatic Range Rover excelled. Here it is winching a disabled "101" up the arduous Herne Spur out of the Wonnangatta.



A "101" in a tricky spot on a solid tow behind the six-wheel-drive truck-trailer. It was only when the trailer lay on its side in the bog that the helpless driver in the 101 screamed.

### **Land Rover Owners' Club of Gippsland General Meeting**

Minutes for meeting held on Monday 12th April 2021.

Meeting held at Gippsland Land Rover, Traralgon. Meeting started at: 8.13 pm

Welcome & thanks by Alan Harlow.

As a club we share the loss of Don Little with Shirley, Sue and Ken Markham.

Guest speaker Luke Townsend will be talking about National Parks in Africa and the development of an off road vehicle.

Attending; Ian Blake, Shannon Brill, Charlie Calafiore, Rod Catchpole, Loris Catchpole, Alan Harlow, Tonee Harlow, Terry Heskey, Sue Howell, Brian Johnson, Graham Shaw, John Kerr, Heather Kerr, Alan MacRae, Helen MacRae, Bob McKee, Annette Fleming, David Murray, Krystal Murray, Harley Murray, John Jennings, Jan Parniak, Colette Parniak, Eric Shingles, Mal Trull, Fred Smith,

Apologies: Ted Allchin, Shirley Allchin, Neville Prowse-Brown, Ann Prowse-Brown, Barb Heskey, Ross Howell, Shaun Johnson, Siobahn Walker, Greg Rose, Lois Rose, Ian Webb, Jenny Webb,

Visitor; Luke Townsend

Confirmation of March Meeting Minutes:

Motion, That the March club minutes be accepted as true and correct:

Moved by Bob McKee, Seconded by Rod Catchpole, Passed

Business arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

Club membership stickers; 200 planned to be ordered. Artwork is still to come through.

Correspondence:

Out:

Emails to club members re meeting to be held on April the 12th and dinner location.

Email from Greg Rose to PV re 10 years of volunteering in the parks.

Sympathy Card sent to Shirley Little.

In:

Emails from FWDV re camp hosting. Passed on to members.

Email from FWDV re instructors data base. Passed on to members.

Emails from FWDV re tack closures. Passed on to members.

Email from FWDV re April E-news Passed on to members.

Email from Web host re Web site hosting fees. Passed on to members.

Email from PV re Volunteering innovation fund. Passed on to members.

Treasurer's Report: John Kerr

Motion that the Treasurer's report be received and approved,

Moved by John Kerr, Seconded by Sue Howell, Passed.

Questions of Treasure, Nil

Motion, The club approve \$220.00 for a two year subscription for our Web site and for Alan Harlow to be reimbursed the payment.

Moved by John Kerr, Seconded by Ian Blake, Passed.

Publicity Officer's Report: Charlie Calafiore.

\*Tribute to Prince Phillip on his passing on the Land Rover website.

\*Big announcement this month has been the JLR 5 year, unlimited kilometre warranty across the board, on all new vehicles from 1/4/21.

Editor's Report: Eric Shingles.

Hope you liked the Newsletter, always looking for more stuff.

Webmaster's Report: Alan Harlow.

The web site is up to date.

	Visitors	Pages
Jan	12	24
Feb	17	36
March	20	78

FWDV Delegate's Report: Greg Rose

Alan has forwarded on the recent email communications from the FWDV Office to members. I was talking to FWDV CEO Wayne Hevey on Friday. The office is very keen to have some high resolution jpeg images of ethical 4x4 use in great locations. There is to be a revamp of the association website and they are looking for photos that will encourage people to get out and explore with their vehicles. We have some excellent photographers in the club who might be able to send some photos to FWDV. I was asked by FWDV to send recent photos of our club's volunteer work. Via a Dropbox account I have supplied approximately thirty images. These are for use in FWDV press releases and reports. The current "TrackWatch" magazine has an article about our November work at Kelly Lane in the Alpine National Park.

FWDV Regional Representatives; Greg Rose

All tracks in the Alpine National Park are currently open. Note that Kelly Lane and King Spur into Mayford will most likely close at their early closure date this year due to recent wet conditions. All other tracks will close after the Queens Birthday long weekend in June. Information on Seasonal Closures can be found on the Parks Victoria website. The Howitt Road is currently in very poor condition with numerous potholes. I believe that a grader is about to address the situation. Some areas of both State Forest and National Park are experiencing higher than normal visitor numbers due to the increase in domestic travel. There are also a large number of people new to four wheel driving and camping. Often these folk are unaware of track etiquette, fire regulations, etc. Please extinguish and report any unattended campfires you might encounter.

Property officer Report; Ross Howell

New rope has been fitted to club banner, and returned to our store room tonight.

Past Events.

\*Coffee meeting at the Royal Harvest in Newborough. Jan Parniak reported good attendance and was enjoyed by all.

\*16-17th February, PV working at Kelly's.

Greg had provided a written report which was passed onto members in the newsletter. New table installed with lots of fun.

\*March 13th. Navigation trip run by Alan & Tonee Harlow.

5 vehicles participated; drivers Ian Webb, Jan Parniak, Ross Howell, Shaun Johnson, and Dave Murray. One challenging hill and one river crossing (two for those who missed a particular turn!), helped make up the course, with lots of questions to answer, and things to collect along the way. Everyone found their way to the finish line without opening their emergency envelopes. Prizes were awarded to all participants, with congratulations to Shaun and Siobahn for taking out first place. We enjoyed lunch together at the Erica pub afterwards, where Alan tallied up the points and awarded the prizes accordingly.

YU LUKIM !      YU LUKIM !  
DISPELA TRAK NEM BILONG EM —

**"Land Rover"**

EM I NAMBA WAN TRAK TRU.



EM I STRONGPELA TUMAS.  
EM I GAT FUA WIL DRAIV LONG EM.  
NA YU KEN DRAIVIM ISI LONG ROT NA  
BUS TU.

Yu tokim long MASTA BRUCE CHEW long

**P.N.G MOTORS**  
MOUNT HAGEN

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An enjoyable day; thanks to those who took up the challenge.

\*March 28th. Aberfeldy Working Bee.

John Jennings, Craig Murray, Vivian Lee, Dave Murray (and the kids), worked in the area clearing grass around tracks and signs. Some whippersnipper issues were overcome, and tasks were accomplished.

\*April 1st to 6th. (Easter), Camp Hosting with Alan & Tonee Harlow.

Location was Wyperfeld Wonga camp ground. Working with Hamish and Kelly from PV assisting campers on site. There were 100 interactions with campers. Great short walks and four wheel drive sand tracks, clear night skies and warm weather.

If you like interacting with people, we recommend camp hosting.

We get to camp at the National Park for free, and our club is paid \$250.00 for this participation.

\*April 11th Trip around Seaton run by David Murray

Sadly, Dave took this trip solo. It was very cold... weather went from rainy to sleet, to snow. The route included 1 'serious' hill.

Events Coordinator's Report:; David Murray.

Future Events.

\*April 16th (Friday) Coffee Get Together

Location: Alfa Café, Churchill (near IGA) Friday 16th April from 10am.

\*May 3rd, LROCG General meeting, at Gippsland Land Rover, at 8.00pm

\*June 7th, LROCG General meeting, at Gippsland Land Rover, at 8.00pm

\*October 28th to November 4th, Melbourne Cup Week: Rod Catchpole.

A work in progress... Location to be confirmed very soon.

\*November 15th, 16th, & 17th., LROCG/PV volunteer trip. Greg Rose

Our dates for the November volunteer activity (Monday the 15th, Tuesday the 16th and Wednesday the 17th of November) are in the Parks Victoria calendar. Even this far out if you think you will be attending please let me (Greg Rose) know, especially if you are going to be away for an extended period this winter. I will discuss the location and work to be undertaken with the Parks Victoria Foothills and Southern Alps Team in late May. By then their busy visitor and planned burn activities will be over.

Technical Matters: Nil

General Business.

Nil

Meeting closed at 8.57 pm.

Next Meeting:

Monday May 3rd at Gippsland Land Rover at 8pm

Pre meeting meal from 6pm at Italian Australian Club Morwell

Meeting and pre-meeting dinner numbers are dependent on Covid 19 restrictions.

Guest speaker was Luke Townsend.

Luke kept us all engaged as he talked about his back ground in the army (both Australian and British) and about his involvement with 19 National Parks in Africa and the improvements being made in reducing poaching their very special endangered animals, which includes the development of a specialised Land Rover based off road vehicle.

Luke is a local 'lad' who has achieved some truly impressive results on the international scene. He has shared correspondence with the late Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh, and met with Boris Johnson. Luke has a masters in Intelligence, which has been utilised to improve the plight of Africa's endangered animals.

It was a pleasure to have Luke along and we are very grateful for the opportunity to hear his story and that of the challenges being faced in the African National Parks environment.



David Murray and family found snow on Mt Useful while on their Seaton Trip, on April 11, in their Perentie.