

K4WD Brindabella National Park Trip 15-18th March 2013

I have been waiting along time to do a 4wd trip like this. The opportunities don't come around very often and we weren't disappointed. All the participants except two who came on this adventure have been to this remote location before and like me after experiencing the isolation and beauty of this area return without a moment's hesitation.

There were 4 vehicles in total and 6 people. 3 vehicles met at Sutton Forest Macas as planned where we had the customary Macas breakfast menu before departing for the Brindabella Mountain Range which is about an hour drive behind Canberra.



We took the Brindabella Road exit at Cotter reserve passing the building of the new Cotter Dam Wall which is downstream from the old Cotter Dam which is to boost Canberra's water supply. Our planned route was to go to the top of Mt Corree lookout and admire the view but due to low cloud cover I decided to do this on the Saturday so we



proceeded past Piccadilly Circus to the start of Gentle Annie Fire Trail and made our way down a not so gentle as the name implies but a very steep trail in places requiring low range to Flea Creek picnic area on the banks of the Goodradigbee River where we had some lunch.

Now I have been coming here for some 25 plus years and seen the changes to the various sections of the park and trails. As you find when the word gets out about these secret locations more and more people frequent them and National Parks start to either lock them up or keep them open with some restrictions to where you can camp and go. This is what's happened here at Flea Creek probably from it's popularity as a day visiting spot by the Canberians where fences have been erected and car parking area allocated here to protect the river bank and area even in this

pristine location. It was inevitable I suppose but that's what's happening in all our national parks where a Management Plan has been instigated to in this case still allow public access with some restrictions luckily not a wilderness area where we won't have vehicular access. The other camping areas such as Lowells, McIntyre's and Mt Coree have no fences so they are in there natural state. So when we have any 4wd trips on our calendar I suggest you get out and do it because one day it may become a no go area. I have seen this happen over the years to many National Parks.

Brindabella N.P. is one of my favourite destinations as it has 4wd access only which limits the numbers of people getting into the park as some of the trails are challenging and a 4wd with low range and high clearance is a must. The reward of all this is the pristine camping spots in a remote valley where only a few people can get to. The tracks maybe steep in some sections but driveable with a slow constant speed. At no times on this trip were we at any danger of injury as all drivers had done a 4wd training course and were experienced 4wders. The tracks are well maintained by national parks and I must say are a far cry from early years when there were wheel ruts and cutaways and bog holes you had to avoid and the going was very slow.

Enough of raving on and back to our weekend away. After a well deserved lunch break we then went up and down a steep track in places driving for some 2 hours in low range to get to our camping spot on the Goodradigbee River at Lowells Flat. We had this spot to ourselves all weekend with only a visit by some motor bikers for a few minutes before they went back. We camped next to the river and all you could here was the water cascading over the rapids into the pool next to our camp with the occasional yellow tail cockatoos flying overhead. It was very quiet and relaxing. We did a bit of fishing for those elusive trout using some Powerbait balls in salmon egg pattern as I forgot to get some worms. As the water was crystal clear you could see the trout go up and inspect the bait but weren't interested.



So smoked trout wasn't on the menu this weekend. Don't worry we had brought plenty of backup supplies. Also on arrival we realized we didn't bring any desert so ordered 2 packs of Tim Tams and some Coke for a sugar fix so rang Peter who was coming with Harry the next day on the satellite phone to bring in those emergency supplies and forgot to remind them about the worms. Also as Harry was a baker in his previous life we told him to bring some flour and yeast to make us a bread damper in the camp oven.

The weather was hot and sunny during the day whilst we were there and even mild at night but the camp fire was still

nice to sit around to stay warm. We all commented on how mild the nights were as the temperatures were warm for this time of year.

Phil had towed his camper trailer there and I must say it was a valiant effort as the track is challenging at the best of time let alone towing a 1500kg trailer behind. Well done I will take my hat off to him. I didn't take my camper trailer but utilized my swag as did Anthony and Harry whereas Peter slept in his tent. To come to these types of areas you have to have the gear and be self reliant as there is no corner store near by or NRMA to call on.

We all ate well during the weekend utilising our Souvla over the open fire which the smoky flavours just gives it another dimension. Phil cooked up a storm the 3 nights we were there on his Souvla while I only utilized my Souvla once. I did a roast lamb and potatoes and Phil did chicken wings and ribs, roast loin fillet pork and potatoes and lamb roast and potatoes. All meals were fantastic and to have master chef quality food in such a remote area is just wonderful. It turned out that no women turned up so the all male crew just bonded brilliantly and no mobile reception where we could be contacted made it so peaceful.

Friday Harry was supposed to be there by lunchtime but showed up at around 3pm apparently directions on the mud map I gave them weren't really clear as it wasn't drawn to scale and they were worried they missed a turn off but they got there and it was slow going but they lost an hour as they got a puncture due to a sharp rock which pierced a tyre and had to be changed and with no other spare had to go slow and be careful.



Saturday weather was glorious and we decided to go for a drive. Harry and Peter just hopped in with Anthony and my vehicle as we didn't want to risk getting another puncture. We drove to McIntyre Hut area which has one of the steepest tracks into any camping area I have been to. It would be impassable if it rained as is all the Brindabellas. So don't come here if it has rained or going to rain as you won't get out or in safely. McIntyre's was clearly used by campers more than Lowells as it had more rubbish lying around. It's a shame that people don't respect these areas and clean up after themselves or else the park management may close it off altogether. There were some people there and the area is a lot bigger than Lowells. It even had two drop toilets compared to one at Lowells. The area

around Lowells was a lot cleaner with hardly any rubbish lying around.

From McIntyre's we went to Mt Coree lookout where the 360 degree panoramic view was fantastic. You could even see Canberra in the distance. From here we went to the camp area below and had a lunch break where we cooked some haloumi and chorizos.

Returning to camp we fixed Harry's tyre which required 5 plugs into the one hole. It was a big cut about 20mm long. To prevent this from happening but no guarantee let your tyre pressures down when travelling over gravelly roads especially where there are sharp rocks. To fix tyre properly it needed a mushroom plug

from the inside. This was only a temporary fix until Harry got back home to get it looked at by the professionals. It did the job as the tyre didn't go down.

Saturday night Harry made his bread damper and I can't tell you the recipe but it was bloody delicious. After our degustation we sat up late around the camp fire reminiscing about how good the weekend was and planning the next trip.

Sunday we got up early but weren't in a hurry to leave this ideal location packing up slowly and left around 11am for Wee Jasper our lunch spot. Phil decided to stay longer and would catch up with us later. The climb out was slow especially for Harry as his tyres weren't the best and he had to be careful where he drove as one section we were going over sharp loose rocks for some 500 metres could damage his tyres. Well we all got out unscathed we thought until we stopped for lunch at Wee Jasper noticing Harry got another flat tyre. Luckily his tyre had a slow leak and so he got out of the national park to Wee Jasper where we could change it. So we cooked lunch first before we tackled another puncture. This time it only required two plugs. This goes to show that tyres are a very important piece of equipment on your vehicle and they must be in good condition. Luckily for Harry I carry a tyre repair kit and have an air compressor in the vehicle as did the other participants. Without it we would have to have left his car there till we could have had it fixed. Harry is now going to get a compressor and tyre repair kit for himself.

Having your own recovery gear is important especially if you doing a remote trip like this one. Give me a ring if not sure what equipment you need to carry.

Well we will have a few stories to tell after this trip and I would like to thank Phil, Con, Anthony, Harry and Peter for making it an enjoyable and relaxing weekend away. So everybody get out and enjoy this great country we live in. Venture past the city limits and you will be surprised at some of the beautiful spots Australia has to offer off the beaten track. For those that missed out hope to see you on our next trip.

.....Regards Peter Notaras

