

Craig's Hut, April 16 – 17 2005

Trip participants:

Jacqui O'Connor and Michael Weir (leader, Rav 4)
Colin and Rachel Goodwin (Kluger)
Bill and Lorraine Anthony (X-Trail)
Richard Stead, with Wendy, Kyle and Codi (X-Trail)
Mersha with family and friends (Kluger)
Harvey, Rebecca and Sean Merrett (Patrol)
Kevin and Patrick Flynn (Explorer)

With the weather set to “just right”, the convoy departed Mansfield for the Mount Sterling Circuit Road. Whilst an easy road, the corrugations and pot holes made sure everyone was on the ball! The circuit road winds its way around the mountains providing spectacular glimpses of the surrounding alps, ski and logging areas.

The convoy re-grouped at the Craig's Hut turn off. This track was a little more challenging, but well handled by all. It was peak hour on the Craig's Hut track so it was an extra challenge to find suitable passing spots! About half way up, I faced an unusual scenario as trip leader; our tail end Charlie, still at the base of the track, had picked up a help call from trail bike riders near by. One of their group had fallen off his bike and had a broken leg, obviously, making it very difficult to ride! Kevin relayed to me that he was still at the bottom and trying to help, but with our maps limited to 4 wheel drive tracks, getting to them was going to be a problem. With most of the convoy nearly at the hut and sitting in an awkward position on the track, the decision was made for most of us to continue on the remaining short distance to the top while Richard and Kevin waited at the base of the track for one of the mobile bikers on his way to meet them. In the end the bikers were able to get to their base camp team, which thankfully included two medics, for assistance. Soon after all AWD's were assembled at Craig's Hut, enjoying lunch looking over the Clear Hills.



After some photos and exploration of the hut, we headed back down to the circuit road which we continued along for a short while, until the turn off to King's Hut. The King's Hut track was in good condition and well suited to our vehicles. The last section along King Basin road was a bit wet underfoot, but was easily avoided – or unavaoided, depending on one's mood!

King Hut is a traditional cattleman's hut set in a natural clearing between hills, right beside the King River. The differences were clear between this hut and that built for the movie! A book was run on which of the kids would be in the river first and several went home with their shoes off! It was here we caught up with the trail bikers who's mate had broken his leg and was now being choppered out.

The grassy areas near the hut provided a good camp spot for those of us who camped overnight. Whilst we set up, others practiced their river crossing skills before heading back from where we had come, and into Mansfield. Richard and Wendy had their tent up in seconds, dinner cooked and eaten. Meanwhile, metres away, Bill and Lorraine took somewhat longer with their new tent, but it went up without a word in anger – an achievement in itself! After scavenging for wood (let's just remember how good my wood find was here!)..... and with the keen assistance of the boys, a campfire was coerced into life and the chairs set up. But it was a big day and it was early to bed for us all, if nothing but to keep warm! The temperature continued to drop through the night and the morning proved to be positively icy!

We got on the move early and headed back to the circuit road and on to Bindaree Falls. The falls are accessed by a short walk up-hill, which was well worth the effort. The falls seem to come out of no-where cascading over a rock shelf filled with plenty of greenery, making for a beautiful natural fernery. As the path continues, it's possible to get right in behind the falls for an impressive view through the water.

Morning tea was at Bindaree Hut, beside the Howqua River. The track to here was again interesting, more challenging than the circuit road, and well suited to our vehicles. The river crossing at the end of the track was a little more testing though and the undercarriages and tow bars lost a little paint!

From Bindaree Hut, we headed toward home, initially via the circuit road to Howqua Hut, where we cut across Corn Hill and followed a track up the back of Mt Buller, emerging on the Mt Buller Road just below the ski village. From there we took the main road back into Masfield to conclude the trip.

I hope everyone had as good a time as I did. Thank you for coming along and making my first trip successful.

Jacqui