

JULY 2023



GROPER'S GOSSIP

TAGALONG

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT – JULY 2023

Brian and I loved our seven weeks at Barn Hill, enjoying the warm weather, catching up with old Barn Hill friends and some Sandgroppers as well. We were sad to leave, but were looking forward to the tagalong station-stay rally commencing in Dalwallinu. The rally was a great success, and the full report is in this month's Gossip.

The next rally will be at Popanyinning on 24 August with Jerry and Deb Curchin as your rally hosts.

The AGM rally will be at Mandurah Coastal Holiday Park, 153 Mandurah Terrace, Mandurah starting on 21 September. The AGM will be held at 11 am on Saturday 23 September. You are most welcome to attend as day visitors if you are unable to attend the whole rally. Following the meeting we will gather for lunch at the Boundary Island Brewery around 1 pm for those that wish to attend. I am happy to advise that to date nominations have been received for all committee positions as follows: President – Ian Moore; Vice President – Chris Back; Secretary – Jerry Curchin; Treasurer – Sue Moriarty; General Committee – Laraine Allen, Chris Young, Brian Bizzill. Many thanks to all those who have nominated. The rally program will be included in next month's Gossip.

Brian and I are travelling to France for a month on 16 August but will be back in time for the AGM. Look forward to catching up with everyone then.

Travel safe ...

Helen



RALLY REPORT – TAGALONG STATION STAY RALLY 20 JULY TO 1 AUGUST 2023

DALWALLINU (by Brian Bizzill)

Helen and I arrived on Wednesday, 19 July after driving down from our seven weeks at Barn Hill. The drive down was pleasant until we got to Mt Magnet when the weather took a turn for the worse. After sunny days and balmy nights, wind and rain were a shock to our systems.

After driving in rain and head winds we arrived in Dalwallinu at lunch time, and after a pie at the bakery, finished setting up to await the arrival of all the other Sandgroppers on Thursday. First to arrive were Chris and Linda, who after recently arriving home from Holland, decided to join us on our tagalong. By evening everyone had arrived, and we had happy hour and opening of the rally around a huge fire set by Jay, our camp host. After several drinks and stories (especially from two old prospectors who joined us) we all tootled off to bed to be ready to begin our rally on Friday morning. We awoke to a beautiful day and set off for Nalbarra Station at our own pace.

NALBARRA STATION (by Ian and Beth Moore)

Nalbarra Station is a 161000 hectare sheep station located 70 km north of Paynes Find and 80 km south of Mount Magnet, on the Great Northern highway. It is 17km in off the highway down a well graded gravel road. The ten caravans comprising the Sandgroppers Tag-along rally left Dalwallinu individually on Friday 21st July throughout the morning and arrived at Nalbarra Station early afternoon, the last arriving about 1430. The vans were arranged under the trees near to the shearer's quarters with one lucky van having an unpredictable power supply! The camp kitchen was "rustic" as in old but clean and tidy with another room set out as a dining room. Two clean toilets in the corrugated style hut and hot water in the shower area.

Set out in the quadrangle courtyard of the Shearers quarters was a huge heavy steel fire pit and good supply of bush wood. This was desperately needed later, as soon as the sun went down the temperature dropped and the breeze cool. It went down to 4 degrees overnight. A quiet afternoon relaxing and exploring the station yards and meeting the camp hosts. Afternoon tea morphed into happy hour then some bar-b- que'd and others had dinners prepared. The evening was enjoyed by the fire and world problems solved.

The next day was bright and clear and cool. Games were played and discussions held, more walks and wanderings of the yards and one couple ventured out on the property to see the sights. They also stood by another couple staying on the station as they had spiked a tyre in case help was needed.

Happy hour by the fire again, relit by twigs in the still hot embers from the night before. A perfect fire for jaffles some campers created and enjoyed. The pit was likely to have been a hopper feeder of hardened steel from mine workings. The stations were hard country, dry most of the time, very hot in the summer, subject to flooding and erosion from winter rains sweeping across the mostly flat country. Many areas also would have been subject to mine exploration.

The following morning camp was broken up and vans left in their own time for the next destination, Melangata

MALANGATA STATION (by Linda Back)

Next stop, Melangatta, about 270 km from Nalbarra.

Most of us arrived without incident, but the Moriartys had a close call with a tyre deflating as they arrived at the station and Jim and Helen arrived not long afterwards, sporting a brand-new battery, having flattened theirs the evening before. The afternoon was idyllic, we settled in quickly and enjoyed a walk along the creek bed to see the rehabilitation underway. It was also interesting to see the small, naturally growing grove of Sandalwood trees which were hosted by the Miniritchie trees. The following morning, there was a tour of the homestead followed by scones on the lawn. A tag along tour around parts of the station followed morning tea. The tour was comprehensive, most interesting, and was thoroughly enjoyed by all participants. Afternoon tea morphed in to evening drinks around the fire. We were not the only ones enjoying the refreshments, however. Two extremely friendly sheep helped themselves to the chips and cheeses - they have obviously attended many such gatherings before and were not dismayed by our boots or cross words. Our quizzes were fun and were followed by questions based on aspects of

Melangata by Jo and Ken, the station lessees. Jo brought her Maremma dogs with her. They are an Italian-breed of livestock guardians, and everyone delighted in their company. They are truly magnificent. After a night around the campfire, we headed for bed and were ready to roll out the next morning in the direction of Yalgoo.

YALGOO (by Alan Kirby)

..... day 7 and The Caravan Train rolls on. A relatively short distance of 66 Km, although it was all on unsealed road, but it was a good unsealed road. The short distance allowed for late departure for everybody with the Kirby's which were last as usual.

As we were now in a caravan park it allowed full access to, services water, power, showers and waste. It was at this point that I discovered a break in the water supply in our caravan. A Big Shout Out to Brian for his assistance and supply of the necessary parts. I will supply you with replacement parts next time I see you. Age is showing as some of these activities might be in the wrong order.

Morning tea was spent at Jokers Tunnel which attracted a good number of members. How the heck they managed to tunnel through that rock with the tools they had at the time I don't know. I believe this was where we toasted Helen on her Birthday for the first time. Lynne also presented Helen with a cake to share. I also noticed that Ron Mitchell managed to brew-up a fresh "cuppa" from somewhere in the middle of nowhere.

In the evening we had a Quiz; Identifying the relevant Body Part. It is amazing how competitive a game can become when there are chocolates to be had. Jill did a superb job as controller, Judge and chocolatier extraordinaire. I think we toasted Helen on her birthday again (#2).

On day 2 a few of us took a drive around town to visit the town museum/court, Jail House; and the Church constructed by the famous architect Monsignor John Hawes. At morning tea we toasted Helen's Birthday (#3) again. During afternoon tea we had a game of Left; Right and Centre which Lynne Kirby won. Then that evening it was off to the pub for dinner, where amongst other things we toasted Helen's Birthday (#4) again. So now Helen is by my count 4 years older than she should be.

And from here it is onwards and upwards to Gabyon Station....

GABYON (by Helen Schell)

We have 2 nights R and R in Yalgoo then off to Gabyon Station, bitumen road then a good gravel road into the camp area. The Station stretches from the Yalgoo cemetery to the first cattle grid out of Geraldton. We form somewhat of a wagon wheel with the vans near the shearers' quarters and

the kitchen, meet Helen at the homestead and accept the invitation to Happy Hour at 5.30pm in her outdoor area with the old dog and two cats. Now down to the serious stuff, cards and a drive to Beardies Pool by some. About 3 campfires are lit and enjoyed. Amazing night skies.

Happy Hour with Helen and back to the vans for tea and off to the kitchen for a quiz. A lovely warm spot to enjoy good company and a red or two.

I took the opportunity to ask Helen if she would mind telling us about her time at Gabyon. Helen was from Northampton and farmed in Eneabba so basically a local. Helen and her hubby were travelling in Coober Pedy when daughter Gemma rang asking how about buying a station and so it began in 2009. It is a leasehold and in 2016 was granted a 50-year lease. The station covers 670,000 acres. They run 900 breeding cows cross Braham/Charolais This is their 3rd year calving.

600 Dorper Aust cross sheep. Mixing sheep and cattle hooves helps break down the soil. There are still dingo problems so nine Maremma dogs are living with the stock, they do not come into the homestead. Helen lives in this homestead while daughter Gemma lives 40kms away.

Tourism was quite active during Covid but has settled back now to groups, artists, twitchers and of course wildflowers.

The Station has 91 windmills and bores, water is shallow and in pockets with lots of calcium.

In the 1920s 23 families lived on the Station, today Helen Gemma and one young girl run it by themselves. Helen also has saved many diaries of times past and a small museum in the old Station shop.

Thank you, Helen, for making our Group so welcome and now off to Mellenbye.

MELLENBYE (by Cam and Denise Caldwell)

Saturday 29th July, the last leg of the '12-day Station Stay Tag a Long Rally'.

We say goodbye to Gabyon and head 138 kms to Mellenbye Station, a working cattle station found on the road between Yalgoo – Morawa Road.

On the way we happen to wave to fellow travellers John and Sue coming out of a bush track, and question ourselves and our GPS's if we were going in the correct direction. Surely our mud map was correct.

Much to the surprise of everyone Alan and Lynne were not the last to leave Gabyon. We left just in front of Ian and Beth. So, you can imagine our surprise when up the track a little way, we turned down a dirt road and Kirby's went cruising past on the bitumen behind us.

What a relief to see Jill and know that Barry, Jim and Helen had met our camp hosts and been allocated an area for the group. All vans had rolled into the campsite by midday after finding various routes to get there.

When all campers were settled in, we found clean toilets and hot showers and an amazing camp kitchen for our use.

Normally the old shearing shed would have been available to us for inspection but the Variety Club is having a Bash the following weekend and organisers had it closed off. (We heard that last year they raised \$140,000 at Mellenbye Station alone). The open campfire seemed to be the only option for our evening activities. On offer this year were self-drive tours or walking tours within range of the homestead.

We, that is Cam, Denise and Jill decided to adventure further afield and drive out to an area called the Breakaways. Cam always the adventurer found the body of a very large cat partially buried in a cliff overhang, causing much discussion as to its demise and how it got there. From the Breakaways we looked down onto a large dry lake area where the year before was home to several black swans. We were also told about how the wildflowers were prolific. Due to the lack of water this year the lake was now dry and there are no wildflowers evident.

Sighting of wildlife was very scarce throughout the trip, but we were lucky on the second day travelling the bitumen to see a male emu with his clutch of maybe 5 or 6 striped chicks drinking from a puddle on the side of the road. On the way back to camp Cam stopped to get firewood helped by Jill and Denise for the evening fire.

While we were away other campers ventured up to the Sea Bar, an observation deck and mobile phone reception area. This is situated above a repurposed sea container, here we made contact with the outside world.

The group gathered around a well stoked campfire for the customary afternoon tea to celebrate John M's birthday with a lovely cake cooked and decorated by Sue. Decadently iced and topped with (not so many) candles. A sunset filling the eastern skies displayed a most glorious pink before saying goodnight. When the sun left off, the campfire glow lit up the night. Each male taking it in turn to poke, prod and throw pieces of wood on the fire. Ian outshone them all when he produced a wrought iron poker which included a hand guard he had made when he was a teenager. Weary and tired the group break away to dine in individual caravans. The brave returned later to share more campfire yarns.

Sunday 30th July. Campers woke in the morning to misty rain, like Hanrahan (the poem) we thought "the day was ruined". The sky cleared and the day was just glorious.

The wood collecting trio from the previous day along with Jim, Helen and Barry visited Wollanoo Rock for a picnic lunch. After noting our intentions on the white board for safety reasons we set off with the mud map and well-defined markers along the way. On the way going through opening and closing gates as instructed, past old windmills and old wells in disrepair we stopped at the old roo shooters vehicle, an American car manufactured by DeSoto which was a division of Chrysler, it had been

modified to carry roo carcasses. I know this because I heard all the oos and ahs and comments spoken between Cam and Jim as they inspected what remained of the chassis and engine under the rusted old bonnet.

Further along the track we passed the old shepherd pens. A little more prominent than the one seen on Melangata Station. Through dried salt lakes and creek beds we arrived at the base of Wollanoo Rock. Here we lazed in the sun while we had our picnic lunch. Enthused for adventure we started the slow but very easy ascent up the rock. We had been told there was a surprise at the top. The 360-degree view was amazing but what was just as amazing was the very life size statue of a horse.

The return trip we kept an eye out for wood to take back to camp. With the help of Jim and his trusty chainsaw we gathered even more wood for our evening campfire. While away others soaked up the atmosphere of the camp and set about preparing for our final campfire of the trip.

A big thank you to Brian and Helen for organising this tag a long rally. We had a great time which included some very interesting travelling and sightseeing with equal time to relax and do our own thing. Enjoyed the way we could travel at our own pace knowing that, if and when we needed support, it was not far away, we could spread out and come together for a shared cuppa, beverage, chat, laugh and the fun we had with the quiz's.

COOROW (by Helen Bizzill)

Everyone arrived at various times at the well-kept caravan park at Coorow. It was a lazy afternoon, followed by happy hour and closing of the rally. Jim and Helen won the caravan prize with their lucky number being drawn out of the bag by Barry, Helen's brother. Then off to the Coorow Hotel in their lovely dining room, all 16 of us enjoying our meals. The following morning, we all headed for home after a very enjoyable 12-day rally. Attendees at the rally were: Jill Ambrosius, Chris & Linda Back, Brian & Helen Bizzill, Cam & Denise Caldwell, Alan & Lyn Kirby, Ron & Lyn Mitchell, Beth & Ian Moore, John & Sue Moriarty, Jim & Helen Schell. Visitor: Barry Mills (Helen Schell's brother)

Congratulations to Brian who put in a lot of effort planning the rally which ran without a hiccup. The two things that concerned him most were the weather and the gravel roads. Apart from one night of rain and one drizzly morning, the days were pleasant and mostly sunny, although the early mornings and evenings were a bit chilly. We travelled over 200 km of gravel roads, all of which were in excellent condition, and over 1200 km in all. Job well done!

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

ANNIVERSARIES

02/08 Cameron Caldwell

02/08 Di & Robin Ashofrd



Hi Sandgropers, the Popanyinning Rally is only a few weeks away, The Program is listed below:

Popanyinning Rally Program

24th to 28th August 2023
Laze Away Caravan Park
Great Southern Hwy, Popanyinning

Venue Officers: Jerry and Debra Curchin

Thursday	Arrive Laze away Caravan Park
4 pm	Afternoon Tea
5 Pm	Happy hour
6 Pm	Fend for yourself dinner and socialising.

Friday

8:30

Short walk

10:00

Opening of the rally.

4 Pm

Afternoon tea

5:30

Sausage Sizzle (food supplied)

7:00

?

Saturday

9:00

Tai Chi without Brian

10:00

Mystery event

12:30

Lunch at the Exchange Hotel Pingelly

5 Pm

Happy hour

6 Pm

Quiz and other stuff

Sunday

8:30

Walk for those feeling spritely.

09:30

Closing of the rally

11:00

taking it easy....

6 Pm

Collective dinner

Great firepit at Nalbarra station



Jokers tunnel

