



AVONDALE VALLEY – MT DALE 27TH AUGUST 2017

Sunday morning, we met up at 8:30am at the Gull road house on the corner of Canning Road and Brookton Highway, Karragullen. Mike and Clare volunteered (or were we volunteered?) to be TEC for the day with Sarah and Paul, Steven King, and Frank and Rosa nestled neatly in line behind Terry and Jan as our Trip Leaders.

We set off just after 9:00am and headed east along Brookton highway for a while before Terry disappeared of the highway onto a bush track, where the convoy meandered gently through the bush surrounded by the trees, low undergrowth and natural leaf litter, for a while more.

The native bush eventually became neatly planted rows of pine trees. Clearly the leaf litter was now in the form of long needle-like clumps forming beds of brown matting between the neat rows.

Further on we passed into a field of brightly coloured Wattles (genus *Acacia*, in the *Mimosa* family). WWW informs me that there are over 600 different species distributed throughout Australia with shapes varying from low, spreading shrubs to large, upright trees. It is often called 'Mulga' (we saw both shrubs and trees). What a sight. The vivid bright yellow flowers distracted the whole convoy. The blossoms were like yellow snow, a pretty awesome view in the West Australian bush. Did you know that one species of wattle, *Acacia pycnantha*, is the floral emblem of Australia and is featured on the coat-of-arms? You do now!

As we appreciated Mother Nature doing her thing, Terry shepherded the convoy up some steep climbing twisting turns, eventually levelling out at a car park overlooking the valley we had just meandered through. We were on Mount Dale and the view was brilliant.

Mount Dale looked down into a 'hidden' tree covered valley surrounded by tree lined ridges reminiscent of a giant ancient crater, with glimpses of the Western sand plain through a 'V' in the wall and, once pointed out to me, the spires of the tallest buildings of Perth stretching up over the North-Western rim.

We lingered awhile with the view and a chat and tea and biscuits (or similar) before we were whisked away again down the hill passing some other happy travellers having a picnic.

More turns and climbs up hill down dale (no relation to Mt Dale!) through creek beds and up rocky climbs, the convoy meandered on. Interestingly as we traversed the landscape, one could not help to notice how the size, shape, and texture of the trees changed with the change in the contour of the land which make up the shape of the Darling Ranges, from the creeks to the ridges.

Down below there were the tall paperbarks and white gums, gradually making way to the Karri and Jarrah trees higher up. The trees also changed depending on the soil type; sand or gravel. The sandy soils appeared to harbor the heavily blossomed Wattle bushes and the gravelly soil littered with families of grass trees. A quick check on Wikipedia advised that in general a grass tree (*Xanthorrhoea*) will grow around 2.5cm per year but that can depend on the species as some grow even faster.

We stopped for lunch around 12:30 in a sandy glade beside a creek in the shade of some coolabah trees (OK so I don't know what they were this time!) We circled the wagons and circled the chairs and got stuck into some serious lunching and chatting while Sarah and Paul's young ones had lunch with a view on top of their Patrol. Frank and Rosa provided a table and we were all happy and merry and well.

Once the problems of the world were solved we reluctantly packed up and headed off.

The terrain now became a bit more rocky in places and 4WD was required a couple of times (OK I did!) with the tree-line, undergrowth, and soil types changing with the undulating terrain.

Eventually Terry pulled off the track into a very scenic little spot. We passed through a stand of bushes across a little stream and parked on the granite outcrop overlooking a small lake. What a tranquil scene. Terry suggested a photo opportunity of the convoy perched across the outcrop. We lingered for a while, took a few pictures, had a chat and once again reluctantly returned to our vehicles for the final stage.

Being at the back of the convoy usually means you don't see much if any, of the local fauna, but to my surprise as we motored through the dusty tracks, a kangaroo hopped across the track ahead, clearly silhouetted by the sun-lit dust from the vehicle in front. It was a bit magical.

Terry and Jan successfully navigated us back to civilisation (the Dome in Mundaring) about 4:00pm where we all enjoyed a beverage and a cake, ending another very pleasant and successful Club day trip.

Thank you to all who attended and we hope you enjoyed the experience.

Thanks Terry and Jan for sharing this very pleasant part of the bush with us and so close to Perth too.

Mike and Clare
Tail End Charlies