



TRIP TO THOMSON BROOK WINERY, DONNYBROOK, AND LENNARD'S TRACK 4.3.22- 7.3.22

Report by David Mayes

This was a fabulous trip full of delightful scenery, thrills and spills and relaxing nights at the glorious Thompson Brook Winery in Donnybrook and Lennard's Track around the Wellington Dam. Les and Carol, and David and Margot, arrived on Friday afternoon and we spent the afternoon wondering where everyone else was. Roger and Jo miraculously appeared on Saturday morning having arrived at 10.30pm Friday night and setting up without waking anyone else up. Their camper trailer reminded me of the Tardis from Doctor Who, with things appearing from everywhere.



Woody was seen lurking in the main street carpark on Saturday morning proclaiming he was waiting for Terry and Jan. By the time we got back to the winery, Damien and Karen and Alex and Maria had arrived and Maria could be heard issuing orders to Alex who was trying his best and dutifully obeying. Eventually, Terry and Jan, Woody, Chris, Damien and Karen and John arrived.

Most of us visited the winery early to purchase the wines and ports on offer, as a way of saying thank you to the winery hosts, Terry and Pam Foster, for allowing us to stay at their glorious farm “for free.” Those of us present on Friday night enjoyed an early Happy Hour to christen the start of the weekend’s adventures surrounded by gobbling Pea Hens, Alpacas and sheep who could not keep their “calling cards” to themselves! The white port aptly named, White Decadence, was ambrosial according to Margot and it was delightful on ice.



We had fun watching other caravaners arriving and setting up and assessing their backing and parking skills, whilst their dogs and children enjoyed the miraculous green lawn on which the early arrivals were camped. There seemed to be some discrimination going on as to where campers were designated to park and we could not work out whether the segregation between the green grass and the sheep paddock was due to ethnicity, value of the vans, vehicle parochialism, personal age, Instagram following or just good luck. Pam later informed us that the early bookers were allocated the best spots, so we were fine with that.

Some very profound discussion occurred on the Friday night, predictably about health issues, and this theme continued throughout the happy hours over various nights. I have never learned so much about prostate examinations, heart attacks, knee replacements and the ABC’s obsessions with gays, lesbians, and transvestites. I perceived that the lack of political correctness intensified as the night progressed, but we all seemed happy about that!

We spent a leisurely Saturday browsing in the Donnybrook shops, lounging around, exploring the countryside, and enjoying the stress-free environment. This was the antithesis of the trip down from Perth which seemed like a non-stop carpark for most of the drive. The roadhouses were bulging, the streets were flooded with tourists and anarchy prevailed. Thank God for on board toilets!



We decided to leave the winery for the Wellington Dam around 10am on Saturday morning and within 200 metres, we accidentally separated into two groups, with Alex and Maria and David and Margot proceeding directly to the Wellington Dam, as was the plan, and the others pursuing an unannounced trip into Donnybrook. This seemed to set another theme for the day. So much for UHF communication and trip protocols and thank God for Google Maps! We arrived at the Wellington Dam Kiosk for an early coffee after a beautiful drive through the Ferguson Valley and

were eventually joined in the carpark by the rest of the crew who had arrived, namely Reece and Julien, Andrew and Hertha, Bob, Steve, and Doug.

Doug summoned what was a large group, to a central point in the carpark and proceeded with a comprehensive briefing. Whilst we were airing down, Chris was observed leaping into the air blaspheming, having been bitten by one of the enormous March flies that were circulating. This was probably why Doug advised us to wear protective clothing and use a DEET based repellent. Jo also advised that Vick's Vapour Rub was an excellent insect repellent. Once completed, we slowly departed the carpark and caused a massive traffic jam on the tiny roads surrounding



the Wellington Dam. We

slowly inched our way towards the Lennard's track, the focus of the day's activities and could hear Reece and Julien proclaiming over the radio that they could not get their Four-wheel drive in to Four-wheel drive which is rather frustrating in a Four-wheel drive on a Four-wheel drive trip! An encyclopaedia of advice flooded the airwaves from our enthusiastic crew, and it obviously worked, as they were soon on their way up the dusty track.

The start of the Lennard's track followed the river through the beautiful forest, and we could see many people enjoying themselves in the flowing water, resulting from the water release from the Wellington Dam. We calculated that there were fifteen vehicles in the convoy and pondered what horrors this might cause during the day. The first obstacle was near Windy Ridge Road, where a very tight, gnarly uphill climb presented itself which required some thought about how best to tackle the obstacles. Steve prompted the next driver in the convoy when to start their run and whilst waiting, I decided that low range with rear diff lock engaged seemed to be the best option and we easily crawled our way over the large ruts to the top of the hill. Soon after, Bob had a front bash plate come loose so a lunch stop proceeded as he frolicked in the dirt to take the offending bash plate off, which solved the rattling problem.



Some of the hills caused major delays as members conquered the terrain, one at a time, acting on advice from other drivers. The length of the convoy must have been at least five hundred metres much to the anguish of other track users. There were some challenging sections towards the end of the track. Thank goodness for dual lockers. This celebration of diff lockers caused some dramatic moments for David after Margot (who David claimed was too rough with the electronic switches) broke off the rear locker switch which was now



permanently ON. Margot claimed fine motor skills were an impossibility on this track leaving David blaspheming as to how he was supposed to drive on a bitumen road with the rear axle locked! Axle wind up could be heard above the cussing! Fortunately, Damien came to our rescue and expertly removed the two switches, replacing the broken one with the good one, hence allowing the rear locker to be switched off. Thanks to Damien for saving the day and our marriage.



At one point near disaster struck on a perilous incline which caused a major delay. Despite the many stories circulating, we eventually deduced that Terry's monstrous Landcruiser had got stuck and when Jan got out to investigate, she slipped on the perilous gravel and injured her head. Then Terry got out to assist and he too slipped and badly gashed his arm. I offered to take a photo but he declined. A huge thanks to Andrew and Hertha who assisted as well as some of the locals who were following behind us. Eventually we all resumed the ascent on what was a formidable, challenging, slippery and rutted climb with a sharp right-hand turn at the top.



There was a moment of frustration when one section of our group proceeded in one direction with the rest of us not knowing which direction to take. Left or right, wait and see and a lot more waiting. As we all started thinking about the movie, Picnic at Hanging Rock, the advance party was eventually located, and we were all happily on our way again. The gold star award goes to Damien and Karen who found the lost sheep and facilitated our reunion.

As light was fading around 4.30pm, we arrived on the edge of the highway and proceeded to air up. Margot allegedly got permission from Karen to give Damien a hug for helping us with the broken diff lock switch and he was later heard exclaiming what the reward would be if he really did something special! After an enjoyable day in the bush, most of us proceeded back to the winery with several participants heading back to Perth. We all had a wonderful day full of thrills and spills and the camaraderie and spirit of the day was enjoyed by all.

That night, David and Margot were having a quiet drink on their own when suddenly they were inundated with the unloved coming from all directions and we ended up with everyone at the winery under our awning indulging in a late happy hour. See the previous thematic discussion re bodily aches and pains and the decline of the ABC into a left wing, champion of all minority groups!



Come Monday morning, with toilet cassettes bulging and water tank levels lowering, we all casually packed up in preparation for the journey back to Perth. I could see that Roger and Jo's camper was harder to pack away than to unpack but I should not have allowed myself to be distracted by this and listening to Margot's complaints about a bad hair day, as a sudden gust of wind grabbed my caravan awning, thrusting it over the top of the caravan, causing extensive damage. Thank God for ocky straps with which I was able to secure the damaged awning up to the main brackets.

The weekend was a great success and we all had loads of fun and enjoyment. A big thank you to Doug for organising this event and for your patience in dealing with the unruly crowd.

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