

## **Christmas in July 2014**

Friday morning the weather was cool and clear and we left home about 9am with caravan in tow heading for the Logan motorway eastbound toward the M1. The traffic was light and cruising down the highway the open road beckoned, how good it would be just to keep going, anyway soon we were crossing the Tweed river and the turn off to Murwillumbah was just ahead. Once off the M1 and onto the old highway the scenery changed from that of endless black bitumen and concrete to open cane fields and the winding Tweed river. Passing Melaluca station we were fascinated at the many sculptured trees in front of the building fashioned like an old railway station. Melaluca station is a tea tree plantation where you can try and buy many tea tree products.

We passed by the Condong Sugar Mill with its wonderful smell of molasses and the Condong bowls club on the grounds of the mill with it's manicured green and old but well maintained club house. We wound our way through Murwillumbah with it's old buildings and narrow streets crossing the Tweed river twice more before coming out of town on the road to Uki. A further ten minutes on we turned onto the Mt Warning road winding our way across the Tweed river two more times via narrow causeways before arriving at the Mt Warning Holiday park where we had pre-booked sites for the weekend. The caravan park was a mix of onsite permanent vans, cabins and open campground with some powered sites surrounded by natural rain forest.

After we checked-in we made our way around the back of the office to the camp ground where we found our site right alongside the amenities block and back up against the camp kitchen. Luckily we would be the last to leave on the Monday because once everyone else arrived we would be blocked in and not able to get out. Even before we got the van backed onto the site we greeted Stella & Dave who had driven in just behind us. Their site would be right in front of ours. As we set up we learned that the Power clan and the Appletons were already here and there were about 20 other members expected for the weekend. By Friday night the place was starting to fill up and there were at least two other groups of campers along with our club here.

Friday night we had dinner with Deb & Les who were camped beside us, Deb made Ossobuco for us all (yummy). After dinner a small group sat around the fire chatting and having a drink of what ever kept them warm, the temp would get down to about 1 degree that night but we would be cozy and warm in the van with the heater going all night. Saturday morning saw more club members arriving early some must have left home at day break. Danny arranged a drive for the Saturday and after a late breakfast the cars started to assemble along the driveway into the campground. Once everyone was organized and the drivers briefing completed we were on the road toward Uki.

At Uki our convoy turned toward the Mt Jerusalem National park and several kilometers of winding narrow dirt forest track that saw the convoy spread out to allow for better vision and clearer lungs in the cloud of dust that was our group of vehicles traveling through the forest towards the town of Main Arm first and then Mullimbimby where there was a short stop for toilet breaks and pickup of supplies for morning tea. About 15 to 20 minutes later we were on the road again heading toward the next stop at Minyon Falls where the group took the short walking track to the lookout platform at the top of the falls, and while an impressive drop from the top to the valley floor below there was barely a trickle of water that flowed over the edge into the pool at the bottom.

After a few happy snaps we made our way back to the cars and reformed our little convoy before heading off again at this point it was discovered that someone who shall remain nameless miscounted the number of vehicles in the group and there were actually 17 cars not 16 as thought (who knew?). Anyway, on the road again, this time we headed toward Rocky Creek dam. This was to be our lunch stop and we found a nice grassy hill with a view over the dam to stretch out and relax for a while. All too soon came the call to return to our vehicles and again head off this time toward Nimbin via The Channon and from there the road back to the caravan park. Along the road we came across a roadside stall selling fire wood and emptied it out leaving behind a healthy donation to the local economy.

Soon we arrived back at the camp ground and the tables of food were arranged for happy hour where the events of today were discussed and new adventures planned and previous ones relived over a cool drink to wash away the dust from the days travels. Tonight's activities would be a communal dinner held in the camp kitchen followed by the Secret Santa gift game which is always a hit with everyone.

Dinner was a rather low key event and once over it was time to clear the middle of the camp kitchen area and arrange a table for the presents which came in all manner of shape and size, everyone that contributed a present was given a ticket that when called would entitle the bearer to choose a present from the table or to steal a previously chosen one from the holder until all presents had been cleared from the table at which time the game ended.

While done in the spirit of goodwill it can become quite competitive between the holders of the more sort after gifts and those looking to relieve them of their prizes, which to those left to look on is very amusing and sometimes absolutely hilarious. Well done to all the people who took part this year and to those who missed out on their preferred prize better luck next time, (maybe). After the game a few people gathered around the fire for that last drink of the night while others chose to retire to the warmth of their camper or caravan to rest up for the big climb in the morning. Now while I enjoy a nice walk through the bush as much as anyone else, climbing a mountain in the morning is not on my bucket list. So we stayed at camp and had a leisurely breakfast as others conquered the climb that is Mt Warning, although not all came back as healthy as they left with lots of sore legs and backs to go round.

Sunday afternoon saw most people packing up to go home and by mid afternoon just a handful of us remained for one last night around the fire. What a wonderful part of the world we live in and we hope to see many of your happy faces again the next time we are out and about in this great big land we call home.

Thanks Heidi and Danny for another great weekend!  
Cheers Tina & Paul