

37th Annual GPA Swim-In and Military Vehicle Gathering: Monday 14th –Sunday 20th March 2016

This year I attended my 35th Swim-In and as part of the week I also organised my own Wedding. What a busy year leading up to the 2 events and after so much promotion over the last few years there were about 100 new participants. The Pre-registered entry forms came in earlier and by the time I left for Corowa we had our 300 packs already allocated. There were many emails and phone calls from people who were planning to attend their first Swim-In this year. We had visitors from the United States, Fiji, New Zealand, and Richard Farrant came out from the UK with his brother. Robert provided the following for me: *This was the year that I finally visited Corowa, having heard so much about it from Richard and having hosted several KVE members over the past few years on their visits to Normandy and War & Peace. The show is rather small compared to some in the UK but the distances people travelled were considerably larger. It was good to see a lot of vehicles that are rarely shown in the UK, photos of which will be shown around friends at home. I was 'encouraged' to lend a hand with the booking in of vehicles on the first day of the show and it helped in meeting members. Many thanks to Neville Smith whose collection was opened up to a group of KVE members where we were well fed and entertained. Richard and I went on a couple of the day trips, to Bandiana army museum, courtesy of the organisation by REMLR and a visit to a local retirement home.*

I must thank your President, Scott Rough, for the use of his Jeep in the Corowa parade, the next best thing to driving my own Jeep. The meet at the showground was a good chance to inspect all the vehicles, but unfortunately a lot of items in the swap meet were too heavy to take home in my luggage!

This was my first time in Australia, but I hope to come again to Corowa to renew old friendships and make new ones. I shall certainly recommend other UK enthusiasts to visit.

With a bit of pre-Wedding planning to do I arrived in Corowa on the Thursday before the Victorian Long Weekend. One of my friends came down with me so it was a good opportunity to finalise some of the Wedding plans and then visit a few of my favourite wineries, restaurants etc. Over the next few days other friends, relatives and Swim-In participants arrived so the weekend was a good social occasion commencing on Friday night with a large dinner at the Newmarket Hotel. The Bucks and Hens night were on Saturday night and then on Sunday evening we went to the Corowa Golf Club. After keeping a check on the weather we were lucky, our Wedding was on Monday afternoon at 4:30pm and the reception followed at the Corowa RSL.

For those who are interested I decided rather than have a wedding in Southern Victoria where I grew up or hold a wedding in Sydney where I live the ideal place would have to be Corowa. Corowa is around half way between the two and with all the local contacts and facilities I could manage to organise things without too much of a problem. With this location and the timing of the 2016 event I chose the Monday so we could get it out of the way and so my brother could attend as he organises a large music festival in Geraldton the following weekend. Family and friends not associated with the Swim-In were able to see a bit of what goes on in Corowa. On Monday morning we set up the Reception room, which has been newly refurbished and now has a balcony and able to take 400 people. The tables were allocated according to vehicle types and I was fortunate to find a local resident, Bill Redford who had a prize winning garden with many roses and other flowers. He was worried about the lack of roses after the weather had been in the high 30's for weeks prior but was able to put together lovely posies of flowers for the tables. The visit to the hairdressers occurred at midday and then we went off to the Corowa Motor Inn where the girls got organised and the Wedding vehicles departed from. Thanks to Kelly and Martin Cunningham who are the owners of this motel. (If anyone is looking for motel accommodation, their motel is just behind the main street and very central to the event.) The Wedding ended up being a combination of military and traditional with my dress being traditional ivory and the wedding vehicles being ex-military. Both Dave Mottram and Doug Bell provided their Dodge Command Cars and I had secretly organised for Manfred Henkel to bring me down the river in his GPA. Unfortunately the 1951 Jaguar which was bringing my mother to the Wedding struck problems on Sunday morning but fortunately Bill was still able to bring mum to the Wedding. We did a Recce on Sunday afternoon in the GPA so we found the right place to enter the Murray and timed that it would take approx. 15 minutes to come down the river. A spot on the river just near the lagoon was found so I could safely exit the GPA by the riverbank. Troy, Bruce McCann and Brian Coker

arrived in Neville Smith's Bren Gun Carrier driven by David Smith. Phil Cockerill provided the music which was set up in the back of his 101 Land Rover and there were a few other military vehicles nearby. Many thanks to all who helped and I hope those who came down enjoyed the proceedings. Ann Penhallow from Tasmania was our marriage celebrant and she arrived around lunchtime that day and after catching up with the boys the stage was set. For anyone who has photos please send them to me. I must say it was all that I wanted and very memorable for Troy and myself and our guests.

On Tuesday the Swim-In was back on track and a large number of people registered in. Many thanks to Dutchy and Eddie who finished the internal refurbishment of the radar van. Both Ian Mastin and Hugh Davis found filing cabinets and with some electrical work also done by Hugh we were able to class it as finished. The Site Office was open for a few hours each morning and then from 3-6 in the afternoon. Robert Pearce organised the roster and there was a set of instructions for each person who helped out. Thanks to those who volunteered to help out. If you would like to help with this next year I think Robert would love to hear from you.

The first official trip of the week left Wednesday morning and went out to Jindera where they visited the school and the Pioneer Museum. Beth and Merv Kennedy went on this trip and wrote the following: *What started out to be just a few vehicles making the run to Jindera ended up with approx. 20 old & modern vehicles.*

Our first visit for the day was to the Jindera Public School, which has approx 300 students [an interesting fact re schooling at Jindera - there are several Private Schools & because Jindera is only a short drive from Albury, children travel to Jindera for Private Schooling]

Our next stop was to have lunch & the Jindera Bakery certainly did a good trade today.

Our third stop was the Jindera Pioneer Museum, [Jindera Store now the Museum] was opened in 1874 by two German Pioneers what an interesting building & out buildings. The Museum was a former store which stocked anything from lace to axes. Part of the store was used as a tea room, there was no waste in those days as the ceiling of the tea room was made from the boxes that tea, flour etc were delivered in & with the manufacturer's name & contents still visible to this day.

We spent several hours at the Museum, because everywhere you turned there was another interesting article & it was fun seeing items that I grew up with [& I am not that old btw].

Other interesting buildings on site were a Slab Hut, a Wattle & Daub Cottage, the original Post Office [very small] that serviced an area known as Huon, Trees that were transported to Australia from Germany, a Machinery Shed & Blacksmith Shop [again shades of my childhood].

When you see what our early Settlers had to use, eat & sleep in, our modern day world just doesn't know what hard work is.

Words by Ruth Molkentin about the Museum are very apt.

*'Memories stored within these walls
Of those days beyond recall
Little treasures, small but dear,
Bringing back the yesteryear.'*

Many thanks to Neville & son for finding this interesting little town & Museum. A good trip without incidents & we got to go in a modern car with friends from SA, who intend to return next year.

On Thursday there was an organised event to the Bandiana School followed by a visit to the Bonegilla Migrant centre. Allan Hirschel and Irene Bulmer provided the following report:

On Thursday 17 March 2016 at 0945hrs a convoy of about a dozen vehicles led by convoy commander Neville Smith snaked out of Ball Park Caravan Park, Corowa on a mission to Bandiana Primary School. Vehicles used in the assault consisted of 1942 G503, Mokes, long-wheelbase Land Rovers, station wagon, to a 2013 Wrangler, trucks and everything in between.

On arrival, the vehicles lined up on the school grounds to await the attack of 270 children, assembled in groups of about 25, who sat in almost every car or truck, pulled every knob, pressed every button and blew every horn. No vehicle escaped their attention, particularly the competition to establish how many kids can fit in the front bench seat of an ex-Army truck. Even some of the teachers clambered in the back of a long-wheelbase Land Rover along with the children to experience the ride 'on a rough road' while the vehicle was stationary. It was quite a site to see ten kids piled into a G503 with the 'driver' blowing the horn and turning the steering wheel without reaching the pedals. He was told not to drive too fast! All the children were courteous when they asked for assistance to clamber up to the vehicle seats as some of seats were 27 times higher than the child. One of the sweetest sounds we will ever hear is the sound of children's laughter and the smiles on their little faces indicated to the teachers and KVE participants that all had a wonderful time.

Following a brief lunch we were off to Bonegilla Migrant Camp.

Consistent with seven degrees of separation, today one in 20 Australians have links to Bonegilla through parents, sisters, uncles, aunts or grandparents. What made it even more interesting is that one of our own KVE members was at the migrant camp when she was a small child. This was a nostalgic visit for Irene as most of the old part of the camp had been demolished and this made it difficult to reflect on some of her memories. Irene came to the camp at age eight months, with her Uncle and Aunt. She was reunited with her parents at age two. They were in a displaced persons camp at Dachau prior to the long journey to Australia. Originally the site covered 130 ha and served as Australia's largest and longest operating migrant centre. It was the first Australian home for over 300,000 post war migrants from over 50 countries. From the original 24 accommodation blocks, only one remains. We were given a comprehensive overview by the site manager and then allowed to inspect the complex at will. Although to heritage restrictions, access was only available to selected buildings. Altogether, it was an entertaining and rewarding day.

From the laughter of children to the memories and experiences of others over 50 years ago.

During the day I helped Fletch with the filming of his next military 'Classic Restos'. We always try to get a cross section of vehicles and usually have at least one theme vehicle for the year and one for the following year. We started filming on Wednesday and were able to get an interview with Neville Smith and his Bren Gun Carrier and an interview with Colin Young and his Bushfire Studebaker. The filming on Thursday started with Aaron McCann talking about Dave Argles' Dodge Ambulance, Phil Cockerill's 101 Land Rover, David Furness with his Vauxhall and Dave Mottram with his Dodge Command Car. He also filmed some of the Victorians with their military pushbikes. During the afternoon was the arrival of the Hetzer tank destroyer from Cairns so this has been incorporated into the show.

We received a phone call from Rob Lowden during the week prior to the event and he decided to bring down his tank for the event. The vehicle arrived just prior to the middle of the afternoon on a Mack and flatbed driven by Michael. Michael made his way through Ball Park and parked his Mack down by the lagoon and shortly after there were many interested people taking photos. The tank stayed on the transporter overnight near the Radar Van and the plan was to get it off on the Friday morning but due to the rain it remained on board. Rob provided the following information on the tank: *Our Jagdpanzer 38t was built in the Czech Republic in early 1945, was knocked out in battle in Feb 45. After the war it was converted to a Swiss G13 and saw service with the Swiss Army. It was subsequently purchased by a gentleman from Luxembourg and restored by Bruce Crompton's Axis Track Services. We took delivery of the vehicle in March 2015. It is one of two running Hetzers in the world today.*

Overnight the rain started so our trip to the Corowa High School had to be cancelled. The KVE BBQ was still held and was well attended. Many thanks to Dave Argles and Brian Healey for organising the food. REMLR started last year to organise a line-up of Land Rovers in Rowers Park. This year they expanded on this and organised a BBQ which was a great social event and many thanks to Kay and Ross Carswell and the other REMLR members who organised this. It has been very pleasant reading the comments on the REMLR forum and we look forward to more REMLR members coming in the future and also in 2 years' time when it is Year of the Land Rover. Will those people with Jeeps try and put on a better show than the Land Rovers as this could mean that the Jeeps will not outnumber the Land Rovers for once.

After looking at the REMLR forum and attaching the vehicle list a comment came from one of their members: *'I wish to correct a minor discrepancy in your list of numbers, you forgot the 76 trailers that towed the 76 Jeeps to the event. I feel this needs to be mentioned.'* I suppose jeeps are a bit smaller and easier to put on a trailer to get them to Corowa.

The afternoon trip to the Karinya Aged Care facility went well. Here is a report written by Richard Farrant: *After taking Jan and Troy's Land Rover to the Land Rover gathering at Rowers Park on Friday lunchtime, I then formed up at Ball Park for the short run to the Karinya House care facility in Corowa. I think there were around 8 vehicles and a good number of participants. We all followed Nev in his Carrier and pulled into the car park. First out was Jim, who seemed eager to see the vehicles and meet us. David "Leyland" Williams told us that he sold Jim 5 new Leyland trucks once. With a dead pan face, Jim retorted they nearly ruined him. I noticed he had a Kenworth logo on his walking frame and his eyes lit up when I mentioned it. There was a lot of good natured banter going on. A number of other residents came out to see us, including several ladies. I noticed one man wearing a sweatshirt with the words 'Boorowa Hotel' on it. I asked him if he knew Bay Kelly, his face lit up and he said yes and we had a short chat. A small world. The funniest thing that happened was when David Williams helped one of the residents back in the building, he could not get back out as he was locked in. His story is that the door security code had changed. All in, a satisfying visit, listening to the residents and obviously brightening up their day.*

On Friday night we had a meal at the Corowa Footy Club and Bev and Lang Kidby gave a talk on their adventures over many years. These ranged from flying a replica of a WW1 Vickers Vimy aircraft from England to Australia, driving a Fiat 500 car around the world to replicating the 1907 Peking to Paris car race, with the same types of vehicles. Exploits encompassing military vehicles included driving a WW2 Dodge staff car from Jordan to England then on to Normandy and organising a convoy of vehicles from Australia and New Zealand to drive from Istanbul to Normandy, taking in Gallipoli and Crete on the way. A very enjoyable talk, mainly by Bev, with support from Lang, along with photos on the screen to illuminate the talk.

The Saturday is the main day commencing with the parade, vehicle line up and the swap meet. From 7am the vehicles started arriving at Bangerang Park for the parade. John Oldenmenger and a number of marshals directed the vehicles. At 9am the parade departed and went up Riesling Street to Honour Avenue then down Sanger Street where many people were out watching the parade. It was extremely impressive and when they got to the bottom of Sanger Street they turned right onto Edwards Street and out to the Showgrounds and Racecourse via Federation Avenue. There must have been close to 200 vehicles. Upon arrival at the Swap Meet participants were directed where to park their vehicles for the line-up. It appears that many bargains were found and Jan McKenna who organises the swap meet for KVE was very impressed with all the stall holders and visitors. It was great to see the Hetzer on the ground and proudly at the front in the middle of the line-up. Many thanks to all those who participated.

On Saturday afternoon there were activities down by the river with the amphibious jeeps and trailers. All appeared to have lots of fun and would like to organise similar activities next year. Those with trailers need to be aware of the RMS rules and provide lifejackets and other safety items required when entering the waterway.

On Saturday evening we had our presentation evening. People who received awards include:

1. Mal Mackay Memorial Award: This award will be given to an individual who appears to get the most enjoyment out of being at Corowa.

Name: Richard Farrant Reason why: Hard work during the year and at Corowa. He even convinced his brother to come out for the 2016 event.

2. Hard Luck award:

Name: Deborah Birrell, Ian Bennie and Jacqui Purdon Reason why: Worked tirelessly on the DUKW but they had to call it off on Thursday after not being able to obtain a specific part.

3. Breakdown Award:

Name: Terry Kowalik Reason why: Started driving his Ferret Scout Car from South Australia but broke down and had a tyre problem.

4. Longest distance driven in a military vehicle:

Name: Gary Schluter from Western Australia in Toyota HJ 45

5. Encouragement Award:

Name: Chris Munford Reason why: Learner Driver from Victoria. He is 17 years old.

6. Vehicle - People's Choice For your favourite vehicle attending this year.

Name: Rodney Bredin Type of Vehicle: 1943 Harley Davidson WLA 42 with sidecar.

7. Chrysler vehicle - People's Choice: For your favourite Chrysler vehicle attending this year.

Ron Sutton from Queensland Type of Chrysler vehicle: 1941 Dodge D20 Van 12 cwt

8. Tank- People's Choice: For your favourite Tank attending this year.

Rob Lowden Type of Tank: 1945 Jagdpanzer 38t Tank

A number of people had to leave on Sunday and head home. At 10am we had a KVE General Meeting and AGM. We were very impressed with the numbers of people, both members and visitors who came along. After knowing all that occurs I was both shocked and delighted to receive an award from KVE for Life Membership to KVE. Both Ian Grieve and Alan Newton also received this award.

After the meeting we went to the Corowa Hotel and enjoyed a nice counter lunch and in the evening we went to the Corowa RSL. This year Richard Farrant's brother, Robert came out for his first Corowa. He knew a number of the participants due to attending War and Peace in the UK and Normandy commemorations in France and he enjoyed catching up with these people and meeting many more.

Vehicle list:

1 Jagdpanzer 38T Tank	22 Dodge Weapons Carriers	6 Dodge Command Cars
1 Dodge Ambulance	1 Dodge Power Wagon	1 Dodge truck D20/1
1 Fargo	1 'Burma' Dodge	5 Ford GPA's
5 Internationals AB120/AR160/ACCO	1 International tractor	1 MUTT
76 Jeeps	11 Ford and Chev Blitz	30 Land Rovers
1 International Mk3	1 Inter F2	1 Chev Table Top
3 Austin Champs	1 Ford Marmon Herrington	2 Ford Falcons
1 Ford 01Y	3 Yamaha motor bikes	1 BSA M20 motorcycle
2 HUMVEE	2 Leyland Mokes	1 BSA B40 motorcycle
3 Bren Gun Carriers	1 Strickland carrier	1 Ford 3ton GS truck
1 Unimog	1 Vauxhall car	1 OKA
3 Studebaker US6	1 Reo US6	1 GMC CCKW
1 Volkswagon	1 Mercedes Benz fire truck	1 Mule

2 Steyr-Puch Pinzgauer

1 Indian motorcycle

1 Condor motorcycle

3 Toyota Landcruisers

3 White Scout Cars

2 Ferret Scout cars

Wartime pushbikes

1 Harley Davidson motorcycle and sidecar

Total 213