

Rally Report

Rally of the Valley, Shepparton area – 28th October-1st November 2011

The eleventh Rally of the Valley, held in and around Shepparton over the Melbourne Cup “long weekend”, was a big success. Numbers were slightly up on the last rally in 2008 but many of the participants had been to one of our rallies before. Many entries came from the Gippsland clubs that we “share” the weekend with, but there were also nine entries from the Geelong club and even a couple from Mildura.

Many of the visitors checked in at the clubrooms on the Friday night. The weather was reasonable and the forecast for the weekend looked pretty good, mostly around 25°.



Saturday's run was in the Benalla direction, with our first stop at Tim and Marie Harris' place at Uptopotpon. Tim's been collecting petrol bowsers for quite a while and everyone was amazed at the variety and extent of his collection (Pic 1). His restoration projects, a Moon and two veteran Britons, were also very interesting.

Next stop was the Benalla Airport, where we had morning tea before inspecting the small but impressive collection of aircraft and associated items. The aircraft included a De Havilland Moth Minor, a Winjeel (Pic 2), a 1948 Stinson Voyager, a Flying Flea, a Miles Messenger and a Tiger Moth being rebuilt after landing nose-first at an air-show in 2008!

A short trip south took us to Swanpool where a delicious lunch was provided by the Football-Netball Club. We then strolled to the nearby Swanpool Cinema to be entertained by vintage cinema advertising (Pic 3) and some short silent movies, most of which involved cars in some way.

Our last scheduled stop for the trip was at the Weary Dunlop Memorial in Benalla (Pic 4), where we heard about the long process to get the statue created and installed. Afternoon tea in the Benalla Art Gallery ended the organised tour. Most entrants took the shortest route back to Shepp, although a few detoured via Dookie to visit the Emporium.

The evening get-together at the clubrooms was a good social gathering with an interesting presentation from Kaitlin Thals, a reporter for the Shepp NEWS whose interest in cars has increased considerably since she started writing stories about them for the Weekend NEWS.

Sunday's run was north from Shepparton, half of the cars heading for Barmah and half towards Bearii. We had to split the rally due to space limitations at both venues.

At Bearii we were amazed to find North Vic Engines, well off the beaten track and overlooking the Murray River. It has about 16 employees that recondition 30-40 engines per week (Pic 5)! Most of their trade is in Commodores and turbo diesels for 4WDs but they will work on anything. It was great to be able to see engines undergoing all sorts of work, including boring, honing (Pic 6), surfacing and crankshaft grinding. (I'm glad the Worksafe man wasn't around!) I'm sure a few participants took down their details and will be calling with their next restoration.

At Barmah we enjoyed a relaxing cruise along the Murray (Pic 7), looking for azure kingfishers and other interesting river sights. After the cruise, club member Max Schier gave us an enlightening talk (Pic 8) on the history of the Barmah Muster Yards, which have been used continuously since the 1880s and are now Heritage-listed. Max's family has a connection with the yards, having been involved from the very beginning. Well done Max!

I hitched a ride for the day with Terry Mansbridge in his 1936 Auburn phaeton – a sensational vehicle that was originally sold through Stokoe Motors in Melbourne. He even let me drive it home from Barmah – thanks Terry!



Pic 2
Pic 1



Pic 4
Pic 3



Pic 5



Pic 6



Pic 7



Pic 8



Pic 9

Pic 10 – 1936 AUBURN
852 phaeton

1914 TALBOT CB roadster



1933 VAUXHALL VX coupe



1936 AUSTIN 7 Ruby saloon



1937 CHEVROLET Master Deluxe sloper

1958 FORD Zephyr Mk II convertible

1959 HOLDEN FC sedan



Monday was the shortest distance day of the rally, with Kialla West as far as we got! Once again we were split into two groups due to space limitations at the venues.

We visited the Chocolate Apple Factory in Shepparton East, where we heard about the development of the business and then tasted various delicacies that are made on site – the Pink Lady Apple and Passionfruit Juice was my favourite. I'm sure plenty of chocolate left the site on the day!

At Kialla West, we were given a tour of the Greendale Grove Olive Shop and its facilities. It has several different olives growing on the site, some of which are better for eating and some are better for oil. The more mechanically-minded were impressed with the locally built machine (Pic 9) that shakes the trees and catches the olives – very clever.

After lunch, we met up again at Emerald Bank in Kialla, where about 25 cars from the Austin 7 Club were also spending the afternoon. This venue has a nursery, a function centre, a cafe, an adventure park and an 18-hole mini-golf course. But the building under construction was the one we were most interested in – the Shepparton Motor Museum (Pic 11). This will house about 50 cars and 30 motorcycles and be a serious attraction for car-loving tourists! It will be open sometime before Christmas and should attract a few car club visits in the future.

The rally's dinner dance was held that night at the Kialla Paceway. The food was good, the music from the Riverside Ramblers was great and everybody seemed to enjoy themselves. Prizes were given out for various categories – Terry Mansbridge's Auburn (Pic 10) won People's Choice, Rick and Jill Cove won the quiz by a narrow margin and Curley and Jan Collins won the Long Distance prize (also by a narrow margin). The fact that Curley recently turned 90 got him over the line!

The rally finished with a big breakfast at the clubrooms on the Tuesday morning. Hopefully all our visitors had a great weekend and will be back in three year's time.

Thanks to the Rally Committee for their hard work organising a big weekend's touring. A big thankyou also to John and Peg Hill for letting Callum drive the Model A roadster for the weekend – he had a ball (Pic 12)!

Brendan Walsh



*Pic 11
Shepparton Motor Museum*



*Pic 12
1930 FORD
Model A roadster
(with red P plates!)*