

The Canberra Chapter's Run to Bright in Autumn

Friday 4th -Monday 7th May 2018

A dreary, drizzly morning greeted us as we headed toward the rendezvous, which did not bode well for the run through the Snowy Mountains on the way to Bright. Fortunately, the weather gods smiled and the briefing was carried out between gentle showers we were able to depart on time. The intermittent rain became less frequent as our 12 cars in two groups ran south on the Monaro Highway, picking up two more cars before the first pause to regroup at Cooma, then heading on the Snowy Mountains Highway via Adaminaby to Kiandra.



Toward the high country @ Kiandra (SO)

Convoy management en-route ensured all our cars turned off as a group at Kiandra to Cabramurra. The mandatory coffee stop saw 14 cars clustered together, as if for warmth, on the Bistro forecourt, in fog and a very cold breeze. As one of our group remarked, it was *"Just like a Scottish summer's day - and the reason he long ago migrated to Australia!"* However, the Bistro coped well with the influx of 28 people and the coffee warmed us up.

Departing Cabramurra, we dropped down to and crossed over the curved wall of the 86m high Tumut Pond Dam before climbing out over the ridges to again drop down into the Tooma River Valley and cross over the wall of the massive earthen dam holding back the Tooma Reservoir. This particular section of our day provided the most interesting driving experience of the weekend. As we climbed out of the Tumut River valley, the curtain of tiny snowflakes, melting as they fell on our windscreens, turned into squishy *"sago snow"* and, suddenly, as we rounded a bend, the road was covered in snow. Not quite expected in May!



Who braked too hard?? (SO)

This unexpected hazard provided some interesting moments for those not experienced in cold country driving - **DO NOT STAMP ON THE BRAKES!!!** Much better to use the gears... No one came to grief, despite obvious evidence of an exciting moment for someone!

With the snowy section safely behind us and the rain showers abating, the run down to join the Murray Valley Highway near Khancoban was an enjoyable excursion through high country scenery (and wandering rural hazards) to our lunch stop at Corryong.



Another kind of rural road hazard (SO)

On arrival at Corryong, the group dispersed and soon found an appropriate range of lunch places to meet everyone's taste. With the threat of further rain during the afternoon, a decision was made to abandon the planned run through the Granya State Park by deleting the sector across to Tintalra and then along the Murray River via Walwa to Granya and go direct to Tallangatta. After regrouping at Tallangatta, we crossed over the almost empty Hume Reservoir at the Mitta Mitta River then travelled down the eastern side of the Kiewa Valley to Gundowring then cutting across to drive the very enjoyable Happy Valley Road before joining the Great Alpine road at Ovens for the final run into Bright. Deletion of the Granya sector allowed us to arrive at Bright in daylight. Despite some 9 hours for the day, our early arrival meant there was time to spare to freshen up and everyone was in good spirits when we strolled through the town centre to the Bright Brewery for our evening get-together.

Saturday morning saw some decide to sleep-in, relax and enjoy the street markets in Bright, whilst the remainder joined me on a foray to Beechworth for breakfast. The Great Alpine Road (GAR) took us to Myrtleford where we diverted and headed north before turning onto the interesting C525 to climb up to Stanley and Beechworth for breakfast, after which the group split, with half heading for Yackandandah and the remaining 4 cars heading back to Bright. The return leg took us through some nice bends down to the Ovens Valley and the Great Alpine Road where glorious autumn colours at Feathertop vineyards demanded photos.



On the GAR at the *Feathertop Vineyard* (KK)

Everyone arrive back in Bright in good time for individual lunching before the *Autumn Festival Parade* in the town centre after which we individually explored open gardens and art galleries and etc.



An unusual tree in an Open Garden (KK)

Our motel location in central Bright meant an abundance of choices for dining within easy walking distance and our evening was *ad hoc* dining at The Star Hotel which provided a good venue for our informal group gathering.

Sunday was planned as a free morning before a run to a group lunch. Some opted for sleeping in, others went exploring the “*river walk*”, and yet others went to the gardens, galleries and/or local markets. Late morning, we re-gathered at our motel rendezvous for the run to Eurobin for lunch at the Red Stag Deer Farm restaurant. The alternate-serve menu of “*fish, flesh and fowl*” proved popular, with everyone able to find a meal that pleased their palate. Of course, the Red Stag provided venison pie to go with their local vineyard product.



After lunch, the group broke up for the return to Bright, some studying the locals at the Red Stag (and also being studied!) with others exploring new roads and wineries on the way back.



Some of the locals kept a wary eye on the visitors (KK)

Back in Bright, it was an evening of individual choice, some grazing and others trying new restaurants but, with a reasonable early start in the morning, most were not too late to bed.

Sunday dawned cool and misty for our home run, with several cars electing to take the more direct Hume Highway route. After the ritual briefing, the residual 12 cars departed Bright for a chilly drive over the Tawonga Gap to the Kiewa Valley and, via the byways, homewards.



Departing Bright through mist and autumn leaves (SO)



Morning light at the Tawonga Gap (KK)

At the Tawonga Gap we took the opportunity for a group photo before dropping down into the Kiewa Valley to run up the eastern side of the valley and across to the Hume Weir.



Morning in the mountain valleys (SO)

Crossing the Murray below the Hume Weir near the former Bonegilla Migrant Camp, we cut over to the Hume Highway and on to Holbrook for a late coffee break. From there we turned off to Rosewood, where we diverted to we make our way, enjoyably for the drivers, through the interesting Green Hills forest roads to Wondalga and then on to Tumut for our lunch stop.

With bodies refuelled, the afternoon's route was again via the rural roads less-travelled (*parts very much so*) from Tumut to Brungle and on to cross the Murrumbidgee at Gobarralong and then on to Coolac to re-join the Hume Freeway and on to our afternoon break at Jugiong.



On the by-roads (SO)

After refreshments at Jugiong we made our farewells before dispersing to independently make our way back home. Notwithstanding the two days of over 9 hours on the road (and 500+ kms) to get to and from Bright, feedback received indicates this was yet another very successful weekend outing by the Canberra MX5 Chapter.

Ken Keeling

Run organiser & words
Photos

Ken Keeling
Ken Keeling (KK)

Shelley Owen (SO)

The “Falling Leaf Runners” were:

- *Barker* *Norm & Ros*
- *Baston* *Paul & Vanessa*
- *Battisson* *Lia & Peter*
- *Evans* *Kerry & Rhonda*
- *Greed* *Gaye & Ian*
- *Hick* *Jane & Wal*
- *Keeling* *Diana & Ken*
- *Matson* *Barry & Elfie Gahan*
- *Owen* *Craig & Shelley*
- *Schiemer* *Giulia & James*
- *Textor* *Roger & Jill Hurcombe*
- *Wakeling* *Cecelia & Steve*
- *Wicklander* *Jill & Dennis*
- *Woods* *Jim & Joyce*