

This story is about the trek from Adelaide to Ballarat for the Corvette Nationals 2023. Achieved in part by the collective skills, intelligence, commitment and improvisation abilities of the Corvette Club of SA member group who were participating. Not only did we make it there, but we also made it back (well one way or another).

(Please add this as a supplement to the next Corvette Club SA Newsletter.)

Day 1 Wednesday - Adelaide to Horsham



On the road again...after packing and getting up before the sparrows, we meet at the Toll Gate by 0800. Ray set the alarm late so it was a rush to get out the door. Arriving on time however to find everyone there except for our intrepid photographer Wombat, who we heard was running late. In the meantime Peter Bartlett knew a good place to go koala spotting in the bushes, with route instructions, as a ruse to relieve himself allegedly.



After a group photo we were off by 0840 and making our way to Taillem Bend where we stopped for coffee and to pick up Rob. Peter discovered a hose peeking out from under his car. Luckily I had prayed to the Gods earlier for 'no breakdowns' on this trip and it was only a prank played by one of our fellow travellers! I heard that the same piece of hose ended up in Wombat's exhaust pipe. On our way again after discussing fuel tank levels and we headed for Bordertown mid-morning with the usual sun peering

into the car from our left side, on with the Corvette hat and Kate was resigned to hat hair for the rest of the day.



Lunch at Bordertown Bakery, but not before passing at least 12 Rolls Royces going the other way and a series of Collins Trucks being counted by John and Jenny. Also noted on the way was Peter and Chris in front of us suddenly dropping their speed to 100 kph, so we passed, later to find out they arrived with only two litres left in the tank, filling up with 58 litres, their biggest fill to date.



After pies and sandwiches at Bordertown we were on the road again, next stop Horsham. There were quite a lot of bone jarring potholes on the Victorian roads and wishing we had higher profile tyres at these times. The trip was uneventful for most but Wombat's car was seen with bonnet up at the petrol station however we all went on okay. Next stop was our motel and we arrived by 1430 in time for a rest. After full investigation, Wombat's car had water in one of the injectors from washing it earlier so crisis averted on day 1. Phew!



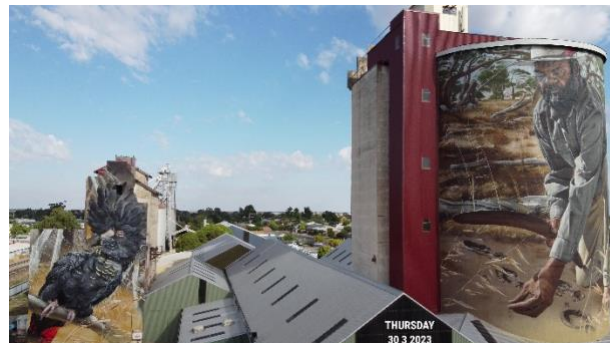
The motel was lovely, well furnished and clean with cars parked right outside the windows. After a few drinks on the verandah together and freshening up (Jenny took 20 minutes but said it was John's fault for taking so long) we all arrived at a very conveniently located community club a short walk away for a few more drinks before dinner. Serge arrived with club members Sue and Wayne and all three stayed on for the meal. There was some confusion around the Aranchini Balls, were they animal based? No rice, and crumbed. But when Serge offered to share one of his three balls, Ray said he would only eat balls that were smaller than his. Enough said for this story but the conversation about Serge's balls (the spare one) carried on a little, you can use your imagination. Chris and Kate left earlier than everyone else who were enjoying lively conversation together.



Day 2 Thursday - Horsham to Ballarat



The plan was to leave by 1000, but there was serious op shopping to be done so another early start for some while others could languish a little longer in bed or stroll up for breakfast nearby. Alan and Andrew went for an hour long walk to check out the silo paintings and were back by 0900. Kate, Kay and Chris went around to Vinnies to find some mandatory decanters and accessories for the Goldrush evening. At 1000 we all popped around to the silo art to pose with the cars in front of them. Alan got his drone out for some great photos from above.



*Story by Kate, photos by John, Alan, Wombat and Kate (30 March 2023)

On the road again (Willie Nelson Springs to mind) making our way for a quick detour to Stawell for the lookout photo on our way to Ararat. We are much better at dodging the Victorian potholes now with only a few swearing moments when we failed to do so in time. Never mind the tarmac transitions which were abrupt height changes stretching across left to right- these were unavoidable. Such is the perils of Corvette ownership on a long-haul trip in Victoria it seemed.



Onward bound but Ararat was too busy to stop at for our scheduled lunch, and the next town we did stop at had no power. Still lunch could be found at a bakery that had a generator which saved the day. Some of the ladies scoured the op shops but it was cash only today. Onward to Ballarat then, pit stop for C3 petrol then to the final destination. Wombat's car was still troublesome developing a miss which



was diagnosed as being from (the stupid act of) washing the engine bay. A short around the coil packs which were to be fixed at home and a spray of CRC improved the situation. A phone call to Graham for advice revealed he'd bought a car in Victoria and the towball had sheared off when he was towing it home. Less than two km from reaching the hotel and we were stopped at a never-ending set of train signals due to the power failure. Patience was wearing a little thin by now. Some of us hadn't eaten lunch or had a coffee all day and it was 3pm when we got to the Mercure. Then less than 1km from our hotel destination and we all had to stop for 2 cars to fill up. Why did the whole convoy have to stop? See the two C3s in the photo for your answer. To top things off Peter and Chris darted off to KFC only to lock

their keys in the car! Was there a spare key? Yes but zip tied underneath the car, call for help to Alan to cut the zip ties please... The rest of us, we'd made it. The Mercure Ballarat.



Drinks on the verandah ensued with stories about Ray's knob falling off today (gear knob) and needing a brass bush to fix it – the innuendo was implied during the discussion that followed. We also celebrated Linda and Jim's birthdays on Thursday. Catherine ordered pizzas for our trip to visit Dale's brother Chris that evening to see his interesting cars, since he lives locally near Ballarat. It was good to see more of our Corvette Club members arrive: Sean, Kirsty, Ian, Gary, Cathy, Dr Bling, Linda, Catherine and Jim. Serge, Wayne and Sue also came for pizza and birthday cake at Chris' place. We all sang happy birthday

(twice) after listening to each of the cars start up. Then it was off home to our hotel hoping not to get lost on the way back.

Day 3 Friday - Ballarat



A day to ourselves after 4mm of rain overnight. A little sleep in and a lovely buffet breakfast was included on the first day, then registration to collect our goody bags. An excellent assortment of items was included. More and more Corvettes were arriving, a beautiful C6 Grand Sport in red, another in pale blue, a red C1, and various other models of colour and configuration to feast the eyes upon. A group of us ventured out to the main drag in Ballarat to go for a walk and check out the shops. Some bargains included a half priced Mimco bag, discounted RayBans, trousers paid for with Salvos points and some gold ripple Crocs for Dr Bling from an op shop. Lunch and coffee at Hudsons before the long walk back to the cars via ALDI, returning to the hotel mid afternoon. Others had afternoon naps or kept their cars nice and clean ready before the show and shine on Day 4.



The Club Presidents from all regions had their meeting in the afternoon and then it was canapés and drinks for all attendees at the Meet and Greet evening. After that more drinks on the verandah before turning in.

Day 4 Saturday - Ballarat Show and Shine





Most were up early to take their pride and joy to the showing area for judging, there were an estimated 200 Corvettes on show. Several good food trucks and coffee vans kept us well plied with food, drinks, coffee and ice-cream. The bus from the hotel took a number ladies in later at 1030 and then returned them to the hotel at 1330 for some pampering with champagne.



Catherine, Wombat and Alan volunteered to assist with the judging and were seen scoring the cars in pairs. There was a market nearby and the Botanical Gardens to explore as well. Everyone else returned later that afternoon to meet up back at the hotel for drinks on the verandah and there was also the option of a Front Bar Afternoon Relax Session scheduled. The evening was a bus trip to Sovereign Hill for a train ride, finger food dinner and a 3D Aura show with dessert, finishing the day off at 2300 by bus back to the Mercure.

Day 5 Sunday - Ballarat Nationals Cruise and Trophy Presentations



Start was a civilised 1000 for cruise to the RACV Goldfields Resort for lunch and presentation of trophies.





South Australia was done proud by AJ, John and Gary. Further drinks on the verandah were had and discussion around mishaps of the day: Peter Bartlett's dash fell out, Rob had suspected ignition problems and a mechanic was coming next morning to fix it. Ray's drivers door lock started working again, maybe due to Wombats WD40 earlier. The afternoon was free to prepare for the much-anticipated Gold Themed Gala Dinner Spectacular.



There was a degree of secrecy around club members' planned attire prior to the evening with wardrobe doors tightly shut. Dr Bling however needed only to turn up 'as is' - say no more. The rest of us needed to dress up with extra bling in keeping with the theme.



As the last day for the convention celebrations were elated and the mood was jovial after free drinks in the lobby, fingers crossed for no more finger food though - which worked well because we had a delicious three course meal much appreciated by all. There were a number of SA winners for more awards and prizes throughout the evening. Peter and Chris won Best Dressed Couple of the evening, AJ won Entrants Choice, Neil and Christine won a raffle prize, and Ian won a bag of car grooming equipment.



The People’s Choice award was a little contentious, so the committee awarded another award for second place which went to a blue C6.



The band started at 8pm and a live auction was held between awards and prizes. The dance floor quickly filled up as the classic hits were played. An opportunity to purchase a black C8 was offered if your self-appointed name came up on the wheel of fortune. Sean’s name came up second place, so if first place doesn’t purchase then Sean is next in line. Three names were picked overall.

Day 6 Monday - Ballarat to Apollo Bay

A wet and drizzly start to the morning was not met without mishap. Rob’s C3 was diagnosed with a broken rocker, Wombat’s car wouldn’t start and needed a push, Peter was still fiddling with his dash, Andrew had no tail lights and no wipers with the mystery of the melted fuse remained unsolved. Rob was left behind at the mechanics with Dale’s brother Chris helping to source the required part (more about that later). Alan had a sore foot all bandaged up because Cathy fell on it the night before.



Wombat led the convoy on Day 6, while John and Jenny had made prior arrangements for meals, interesting stops along the way and accommodation at night.



Kate prayed for no more breakdowns but was seen rescuing the alcohol from the fridge after drive off at 1005, a quick u-turn back to the hotel was necessary. Obviously she didn't pray hard enough because by 1115 Dale's car boiled after jumping a fan belt and everyone pulled over to help including the local police. They got the fan belt back on but the engine was still hot, drinking water was harvested from each of the cars however not enough to touch the sides. More about that later. Alan, Dale and Andrew stayed back while the rest of us carried on towards lunch at Geelong Boat House.



Rudy's car went into limp mode on the way to lunch but it got going again. John's car had lost second gear but also made it to lunch. More about that later. Lunch was great because it wasn't finger food, so we were all well pleased with fish and chips and some extra visitors who joined us. Ray helped with Rudy's car but after lunch it had gone into limp mode again at Why River on the way to Apollo Bay. Kay took a toilet break in the bushes and slipped in the mud, John's car lost reverse gear by the time we got to Apollo Bay, Peter's dash fell out again, while Alan, Dale and Andrew got to Apollo Bay first by taking a direct route.



At the end of the day:

- Dale's car ended up with his brother Chris for repairs,
- Rob's car was stored locally and Serge collected Rob in his motor-home for the trip back to Adelaide. Rob to collect later with a trailer,
- Wombat's car was okay,
- John's car had lost two manual gears, and
- Rudy's car was tow trucked to Apollo Bay for further investigation.

By dinner time most were ready for a good pub meal at the Brew House Hotel conveniently located next door to the Comfort Inn where we were staying.





Day 7 Tuesday - Apollo Bay to Portland

Another early start planned to hit the road by 1000. However, we wanted to be sure Rudy and Kay had some tentative plans in place for their car, as they decided they would join us later in a hire car. But more about that later. Off we went again: now termed the 'Banged Up & Busted Tour' by Wombat, we left Rudy and Kay at Apollo Bay pending RAA negotiations. This stretch was the much anticipated 12 Apostles section, so we were really looking forward to it. The road was in better repair compared to the rest of the trip so far, meaning fewer potholes to dodge and the scenery was lush driving through the countryside.



Nevertheless, it wasn't long before trouble struck and Andrew's car broke down. No wipers or tail lights still, but now the battery was drained flat and had died on a difficult bend in the road. Alan and Ray (in the two yellow recovery vehicles) were close behind to help. The alternator plug had fallen off but when put back on the engine still needed a jump start. John had some jumper cables 30km up the road, but Ray found some after emptying the entire contents of his boot first.



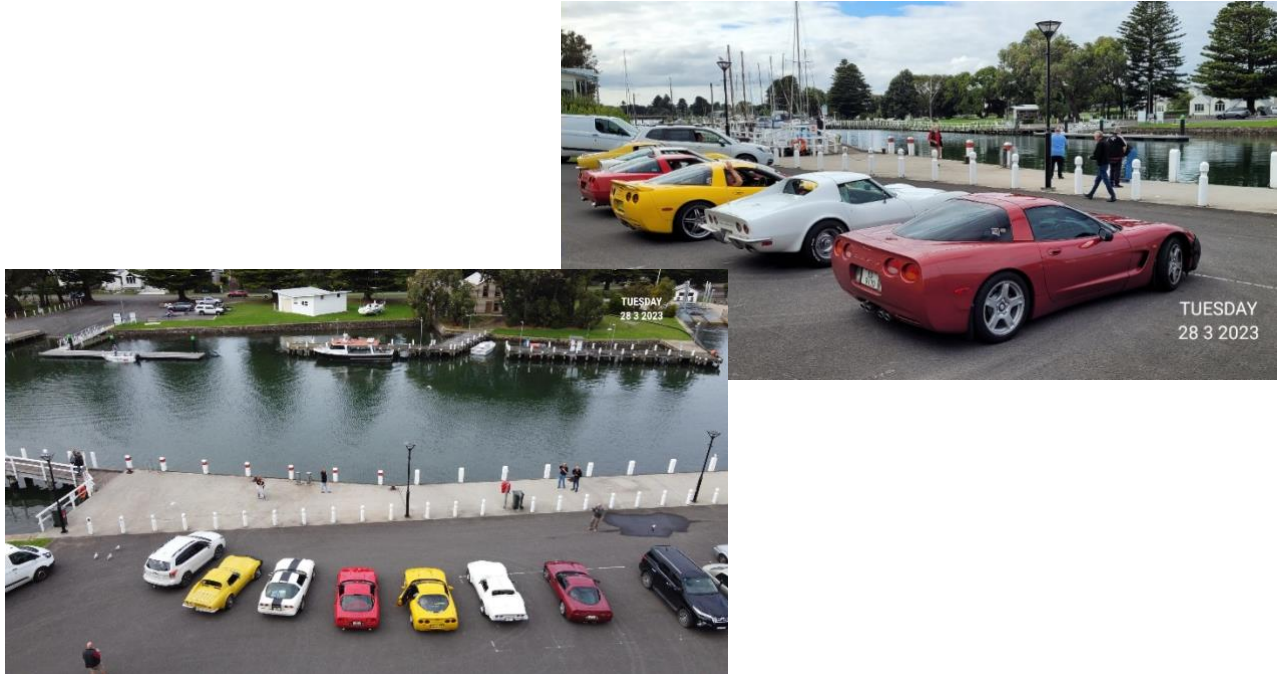
It was a fast and successful manoeuvre as Alan parked on a blind corner in the road, while Dale, Ray and Kate were traffic control. And in no time we were on the road again catching up to the others who'd stopped up ahead at Lavers Hill.



The 12 Apostles was definitely worthwhile seeing, difficult to realise the sheer size and height of the spectacle. A similar experience I had at the Grand Canyon, huge but hard to fathom just how huge. There were lots of viewing points for fantastic photo opportunities but drones were prohibited.



Altogether again we headed off to Port Campbell for lunch where we stopped for a casual bite to eat. Then we made a Cheese Factory stop where we saw sunshine for the first time all trip, and then a more leisurely stop at Port Fairy where we had coffees and ice cream, and yes, it can be confirmed that yet another decanter was purchased (but this time a present for Kate – thanks Chris!).



The last leg of the day was to Portland where we checked in to our accommodation and moseyed up the road for a pub meal dinner, which was exceptional.





So, the tally for Day 7 mishaps and misfits is as follows:

- Dale's car was with his brother Chris at Ballarat for RAA collection, he was now riding with Andrew.
- Rob's car was stored at Ballarat while Serge and Rob made it back to Adelaide in the motor-home around midnight Monday. Rob was arranging RAA collection.
- Wombat's car was having no more start issues but running on 7 cylinders the 8th still misfiring.
- John's car had no second gear still but reverse had returned.
- Rudy's car was tow trucked from Apollo Bay to Warrnambool with Rudy and Kay riding along. Planning to hire a car at Warrnambool to join the rest of us at Robe, while the RAA truck the car back to Adelaide.
- Peter's car acquired a longer (non-original) screw to hold the dash in place so it didn't fall out today. However, wipers were dependent on pothole bumps in the road: one bump off, two bumps on.
- Ray's car was okay but driver had ongoing issues needing prescriptions sent from Adelaide to Portland pharmacy for collection before closing time at 7pm (we made it).
- Alan's car was okay but driver was limping about with an injured accelerator foot all day, ibuprofen and ice were recommended and utilised effectively.

Day 8 Wednesday - Portland to Robe

First day on the road with sunshine! All of us up and ready to go by 0930. We travelled from Portland to Nelson, where we stopped at the cafe, then Nelson to Mt Gambier where we stretched our legs and took photos at the blue lake and surrounding areas.



Then on to Beachport where we stopped for a casual lunch break and walkabout. Rudy and Kay met us there in a hired Mitsubishi, having driven there straight from Warrnambool. Then the final leg from Beachport to Robe was mostly uneventful, minor setbacks for today included Wombat's oil light coming on needing a top up of oil, and Peter had to stop a couple of times because his car bra strap kept coming loose.





Therefore, we were able to check in at our Motel in Robe by 3pm. Dinner was a short was away at The Caledonian Hotel where John and Jenny were presented with a card and gift from all of us, as it was the last dinner together before heading back to Adelaide in the morning and parting our separate ways. Please note, there were no actual breakdowns today (but John did get low on wiper washer fluid).

Day 9 Thursday – Robe to Adelaide

Up and ready by 0715 for the last leg of the journey home, stop at Kingston for Peter, then we stopped at Meningie for coffee, snacks, fuel and farewells.

Awards for the road trippers are as follows:

1. Most spectacular breakdown - First Place goes to Dale C3.
2. Most spectacular breakdown – Second Place goes to Andrew C4.
3. Most spectacular breakdown – Third Place goes to Rudy and Kay C5.
4. Most fastidious car owner and best op shoppers – Award goes to Peter and Chris C3.
5. Earliest to retire – Award goes to Rob C3.
6. Most friendly to all – Award goes to Wombat and Norene C4.
7. Best leader and organisers – Award goes to John and Jenny C5.
8. Most helpful recovery vehicle – Award goes to Alan C3.
9. Most visits to the toilet and second most helpful recovery vehicle – Award goes to Ray C5.

*Ray's car did 1200.8 km round trip home to home with average petrol consumption of 9.5 l/100 km.