

# The Linden's Report – Walhalla Weekend aWay

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It has been years since I last visited Walhalla, so when the invitation from the Rootes Group came along, it seemed like the time was right to visit it once again.

The tiny community at Walhalla has about 12 permanent residents at any one time and relies heavily on the tourist trade.

It was the last town in Victoria to be connected to electricity.



The main attractions are the Long Tunnel Gold mine, the restored shops in the main street along Stringers Creek, and the hilltop cricket ground.

Millions of dollars have been spent to restore the town's tourist railway winding its way from the Thomson River through the mountains to the town centre.

We set off on Saturday morning (26th November) full of apprehension, and anticipation. There was a major storm front passing and it was quite clear that we would have to drive through it. Sure enough, at Gisborne, 45 minutes into our trip, the heavens opened. I have not seen rain like it for a very long time.

Water cascaded into the car, leaking out of the dashboard in a number of places. The windscreen however seemed to be holding up fairly well. I think a new seal around the ventilation flap in front of the windscreen is well overdue. By the time we emerged out the eastern side of Melbourne, the sun was shining and things were looking good, until I had to turn off the Princes Highway at Bunyip.

I slowed the car down, turned left, and the MM4 stalled, it reFUSEDed to go, in the nature strip in the middle of six lanes of freeway.

As luck would have it, not 30 seconds later, the Police turned up (Were they following me?). Instantly, they moved their vehicle to block three lanes of oncoming traffic, and pushed my car off the freeway onto the Bunyip road. They asked if I was OK, yes, Mobile phone, RACV coverage, which is all you ever need, and off they went. I must admit I was most happy to see them, and I was very happy for the assistance provided. A quick search determined a blown FUSE. Another search revealed that I did in fact have a spare, which I installed, and lo, we were mobile again. All in all about two minutes travelling time lost.

Lotte then plugged in the GPS, and instantly, the car died, another FUSE gone. OK, no more GPS.

Somehow, yet again, I found another spare FUSE, and once again we were mobile. Off to Bunyip we rushed, only to find we were still the first ones to arrive so a bit of time was spent looking for the best place to have a long overdue coffee.

Fearing that I would run out of FUSEs, the rest of the day was spent calling into every conceivable service station looking for the mythical 35 amp FUSE. For those that may find themselves in a similar situation, don't bother looking, they are not readily available.

We left Bunyip, took the side roads, and joined the highway near Warragul. Delightful country roads, nice weather, good scenery, and all in all a very pleasant drive. We turned off the highway at Moe, and headed inland to Rawson. The road here is quite reasonable, climbs a bit, and it did test the suspension with its undulations. It soon became apparent that my front shock absorbers were not as good as they used to be. The rear ones are probably due for retirement as well. The car lurched through corners, front tyres scraped, and I nearly had to slow down in some spots.

The shock absorber issue is going to require some research. Many years ago, I had Pedders Suspension rebuild my original units, and they have been very good up till now, and were way better than the substitute units I had tried at the time.

Off I went to Pedders to see if they could do it again, and no, they can't.

Apparently, it was one "old-timer" that did all that type of work. He retired, and there is no-one to replace him. Another skill lost.

Back to the weekend away.

We arrived at Walhalla, at our designated time, in light drizzle, only to find that our first highlight, a trip on the Walhalla Goldfields Railway, was cancelled due to a derailment on the previous trip. Apparently, that is not uncommon, it is just a pity that it didn't happen on our trip. That really would have been something to write about.

Instead, we spent some time playing tourist in the township, and eventually returned to our accommodation at Rawson. The weather was inclement, but still pleasant enough to sit outside our room, with table and chairs, cheese and biscuits, and plenty of beverage. We must have looked comfortable as eventually we were joined by at least half of the other participants.

Reflecting on the days events, I asked one of the other participants, Ian Aspinall, if he happened to have any spare FUSEs in his glovebox, knowing full well that as he also drives a Mark IV, and is usually quite prepared. Sure enough, he did, so I borrowed a pack, just in case.



The evening meal was on-site, and the organisers decided to open up the bar using the money not used on the Goldfields Railway tour.

A very pleasant night was had by all.

Sunday morning, I conducted a thorough search of my own car, and eventually found my own spare pack of FUSEs, so gladly returned the borrowed set.

We then checked out and went back to Walhalla for a tour of the Long Tunnel Extended Goldmine. It was an excellent tour, far exceeding my expectations, and it is to be highly recommended to anyone that ventures to that area.

We then convoyed (sort of) to Maffra. There was some confusion over directions, and consequently, some of us were late for lunch. That's my story and I'm sticking to it. Our lunch venue, and reason for going was to visit the Gippsland Vehicle Collection.

The venue was originally quite run-down, but is now quite useable thanks to the tireless efforts of the local community and some help from Murray-Goulburn, who own the premises.

The collection is constantly changing, our visit coinciding with the Ford display, which was not particularly relevant, but still interesting.

We left about 3:30 Sunday afternoon and headed for the long trek back to Castlemaine, arriving home about 7:30 that evening.

The MM4 did it comfortably, but the driver and passenger were both quite shattered. We had covered over 600 km in one day which is way more than we are used to, but it did give us a good idea of how we are going to organize our Trek to Tamworth

Thanks very much to Matt and Kristi from the Rootes group for the invitation, and their excellent organizational skills

Ray and Lotte Linden

