

Ray's Report – Humber 2003 Echuca

Many months of careful planning went into organizing the Echuca 2003 gathering, most of it by Lotte and Rhonda, with me and Ian A. providing logistical bloke-type support. Finally, it was my turn to assist, firstly by providing an extra vehicle (Sarge – the Series VA Super Snipe) to assist in transferring all the paraphernalia, and secondly, a cursory glance over MM4 (the Mighty Mark IVB Super Snipe). I had recently had a scare when I noticed an out of date rego label on Sarge, but a phone call to VicRoads confirmed that it really was registered, and only needed a replacement label (the original lost in our recent move to Castlemaine), which they duly sent, and which I duly applied. Unfortunately, the same couldn't be said for MM4. Its Club Permit had indeed expired. A quick roadworthy, a couple of authorised signatures, a visit to VicRoads, and everything was once again covered. Three days on the battery charger, just to make sure we didn't have to push it, and my pre-rally preparations were complete.



On the day of departure, a last minute check under Sarge's bonnet before departure revealed a small oil leak, due to two bolts missing out of the front timing case cover. I replaced them and all was OK. A check of all fluids in MM4 revealed a shortness of brake fluid, which was rectified immediately. Finally we departed at 4pm on Thursday 2nd October, only 2 hours late – Lotte and me in the MM4, Ian driving Sarge, and Rhonda bringing up the rear in the Humber Barina.

All went well until the lights of Echuca appeared when Sarge started behaving strangely. No matter how much Ian tried to coax the dear old thing, it did not want to proceed. Drastic measures were called for. Opened bonnet, reverse flushed the fuel line, engaged electric pump to refill fuel line, and away we went once again.

Arrived, checked in, thought about what was coming, and slept well.

Friday 3rd

Checked venues, picked up keys, and arrived early at the Moama Kerrabee Sound Shell, only to find we weren't the first ones there. All went mostly well, wind chill excepted, with lots of pleasant catching up with old friends and new. One event down, five to go. Lotte had some trouble sleeping.

Saturday 4th

Arrived early at the Echuca Aquatic Reserve, parked MM4, and set up tea and coffee facilities. Brilliant day, lovely location, lunch worked well, lots of regalia sales, and did the mandatory walk past all display vehicles, Ian and I performing the judging as we went. One pleasing trend I noted was the increase in the number of Humber on full rego. Packed up and prepared for the evening social dinner at the Echuca Workers Club. We arrived early to set up, only to find that in comparison with the majority of attendees, we were very nearly late. The evening was a great success, with well over \$200.00 raised in the raffle for a local charity. Three events down, three to go. Lotte's insomnia got worse.

Sunday 5th

Arrived early at the Murray River dock for our 2 hour lunch time cruise on the MV Mary Ann, only to find that half the Humber crowd had already boarded. So keen were our fellow enthusiasts that a special mention must go to the Judds, who were the very last to board. They were on time, arriving at precisely 11:45am, for 12:00 boarding, for a 12:30 departure. The trip up and down the river was very pleasant, with many photo opportunities. It was nice to see the river with more water than I have seen on the previous visits. Disembarked at 2:30, and retired to gather our thoughts for the presentation dinner. Arrived early, and you guessed it – we were among the last.

Meals consumed, awards given, trophies presented, speeches made. Five down – one to go. Lotte slept at least 2 hours.....

Monday 6th

To ensure consistency with the previous events, we were not the first to arrive at Chanter Estate Winery and Military Museum in Moama for the farewell morning tea. The proprietor opened the large shed for fellow enthusiasts, tea and coffee consumed, some wine tasting involved, and checking out the very comprehensive military museum – vehicles and memorabilia - all in all, a very pleasant way to wind down the gathering. MM4 thought so too, or so it appeared. On departure, MM4 progressed a whole ten feet, before stopping completely. No amount of coaxing would re-ignite the desire to go home. This actually was a tad inconvenient as we had a prior commitment to take my Mother-in-Law to Tullamarine airport for an international flight by 5:00 that evening. We replaced some wires, a coil, and eventually gave up. It was just as well I'd brought a spare Humber – Sarge. We swapped belongings and finally departed from Echuca at 1:45pm.

We arrived at Castlemaine at 3:45, picked up folks, and hit Tullamarine at 5pm exactly, bid farewell at 6:15 and headed back to Castlemaine for a previously arranged restaurant date at 7:30pm. We were 5 minutes late, but the meal was worth it. That night, Lotte slept!

Tuesday 7th

Nothing – except running around picking up points, condenser and wires for MM4.

Wednesday 8th

Back to Echuca to MM4, which was still at Chanter Estate, locked up and safe and apparently much admired. Replaced the points, checked adjustments, and hit the starter. Mostly it went well. Five out of six cylinders started - enough to run, but not comfortably. I booked it into the local RACV depot, which just happened to be the Ford dealership. Unfortunately, they couldn't get to it immediately, and could I please come back at 4pm, which I did, after narrowly avoiding a parking ticket by begging and pleading and wringing my hands in despair. In the end, I paid \$70.00 to the dealership, with absolutely no change in the running status. I could get MM4 to run fairly smoothly on light throttle, which I did for the next two hours. Discovered on arrival home that the dealer's mechanic had forgotten to properly secure the distributor cap, using only one clip instead of two.

My Echuca rally finished at 6pm that evening, on arrival back at the Castlemaine Castle.

What a team - without Rhonda and Ian, it wouldn't have been possible!

PS: We moved to Castlemaine at the end of August, and are living in half The Castle while the other half is still being finished – and we're loving every moment.