

ONSHORE WEEKEND – CAMP ON ALLYN – EAST GRESFORD

By Barry and Kathy White, 'Free Spirit'.

On Friday 6th July, after lunch we waved off two of our grandsons who had a two-day sleepover with us and YES! finished preparing to take the caravan to East Gresford for the Club's on shore weekend at "Camp on Allyn". We arrived to find Phil, Kim, Kevin and Gaylene set up plus they had erected six of the Club's gazebos ready for a community gathering point. We positioned our caravan to add another link to the growing "wagon train circle".

Later in the afternoon Hart's friends, Ellen and Roger and their two dogs, Jazz and Honey arrived in their van, followed at dusk by Hart and Pam in their newly acquired van with their dog Mardi. The pit fire was great and a good gathering point.



Later we turned in for an early night emerging next morning to find a new addition to the circle in the shape of a tent with Norma and Andrew up cooking breakfast. They had arrived later in the evening and popped up their tent in the dark.

A cool sunny rather gusty day lay ahead and it was time after breakfast to explore this lovely Angus cattle property, so green, with an

excellent quite level camping ground, with hot showers, toilets and a camp kitchen provided.

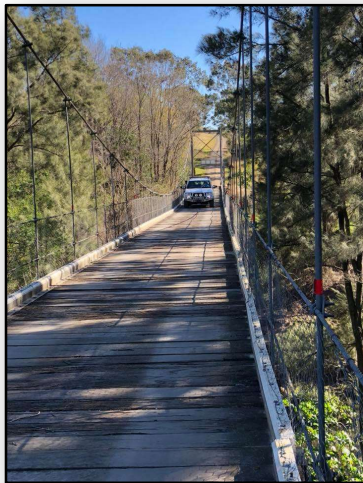
Kathy and I wandered down the steep bank behind the vans to the lovely Allyn river. It was such a pretty and peaceful scene, the cool clear water rushing quickly over the rocks made you want to linger and enjoy the sounds and



natural beauty of nature on this tree lined river. Apparently, it is home to a very shy platypus but he/she wasn't around to delight us that morning. So, eventually we wandered off to have a chat with Robyn the owner/caretaker.

We continued on towards the front gate to get a closer view of the long abandoned, now in ruins, very interesting, brick

(quarried from the property) "Clevedon" homestead. It would have been quite a classy and impressive homestead in its day with lots of big windows spaces, and evidence still of beautiful detailed wrought iron veranda railings on the top and bottom levels and large wide stone steps placed side by side making a once grand entrance to the wide veranda and front door, but now too dangerous to enter. The top section was removed and was the Trevallyn Post Office and is now a private residence. Evidence of the staircase can still be seen in the entrance hall apparently. The home looks rather sad now, partly overwhelmed by its coat of lush green vine with a neglected but fruitful orange tree at the back and a well, now dry, beyond.



Chris and Glennis arrived with their new miniature poodle (Cocoa?) in their motor home making our caravan circle cosy and more complete and making a grand total of 14 adults and 4 canines. Later Chris emerged from his motor home with a game that involved pegging out an area and getting teams together to throw discs close to a ball – a bit like a game of bocce ball. I really enjoyed the game with the others.



During the day tables and chairs began appearing in the covered area, the wood fire continued to burn and as the day drew on we had two fire pits going.

Rain clouds threatened so Chris produced some screens from his motor home which were erected on one side of the gazeboes and other screens were placed at right angles down the other side, giving us protection. Kevin and Phil put up LED lightening, food preparations were beginning for a delicious three course community meal. A line of tables was set up with a row of four Webber's atop, the fifth being attached to our caravan, plus a hotplate to heat the pumpkin soup which was accompanied with warm crusty bread.

Two boned legs of pork, two legs of lamb and a varied and delicious variety of baked vegetables were soon cooking away in the Webbers. Fortunately, the rain except for a few light drops passed us by leaving a lovely rainbow to enjoy at sunset. The wind gusts increased though for a time and one gush came roaring over the hill giving the six gazeboes tied together and staked down a real shaking, dislodging the sides.

The cold and wind gusts didn't prevent us from having a lovely hot meal under cover followed by delicious deserts. Once dinner was over and the community washup completed, everyone pulled their chairs around the two big blazing fire pits. The wind had eased off, the stars were out, everyone was I'm sure feeling very relaxed and mellow chatting and



sipping their favourite drink until quite a bit later in the night. It was a great relaxed atmosphere and a good way to complete a wonderful evening together.

A good sleep in was had by all it seemed, followed by a community breakfast. Then it was time to pull down the shelters and move off our site as the powered site had been booked. We just moved a few metres down the grass, Chris and Glennis decided to keep moving on home and the rest of us pulled the chairs out to sit in the sun. Soon the conversation turned to unhooking and going for a drive to Lostock Dam. Hart's friends stayed back but the rest of us drove off following Phil and Kim.



It was a lovely scenic drive out to the Dam, and that part of the Hunter Valley looked green and breathtakingly beautiful as we wandered our way through the hills. Interestingly Phil stopped in the centre of a quaint white painted bridge we were crossing and checked the state of the river quite a way below. He then came up to our car and the others suggesting a river crossing on the way back. It didn't quite twig with us that this would be the place for the crossing as the river looked a long way below. From the dam we drove around to the overflow where we stopped again and enjoyed a late morning tea snack. From there we drove through the caravan park to see the spillway which had plenty of water rushing over it. We continued along the

road till we came to the Scout Camp on another section of the Allyn River. Phil showed us around and it was so peaceful standing on the edge listening to the water bubbling along on its way. As we approached the bridge on the return trip, Phil's car suddenly veered off the road and disappeared down a rather steep stony embankment. Being the car following we realised this was the intended river crossing. We thought - well if its good enough for Phil and Kim we'll give it a go, followed by Hart and Pam. Kevin and Gaylene resisted temptation and a dirty vehicle and took the bridge, managing to get a quick pic of Hart and Pam crossing.

On the way back, we also stopped at the quaint little Lostock Church and cemetery and the old school which can be booked for overnight accommodation. Kathy took a photo of me striding down the front path and opening the church door, then venturing inside as she has never seen me **so keen** to enter a church!

Once back at our camp and afternoon snack it was time to pack up and head home. Kathy said I kept saying all weekend how wonderful it was and how great the people are and how good the Club is – so true!

A BIG thankyou to Phil and Kim for organising a fantastic weekend, finding a terrific location and for all the organising and thought put into the meal preparation, the shelter and all the planning and work that was required to make it such a successful and enjoyable weekend, and of course their great helpers Kevin and Gaylene a BIG thank you as well. I'm sure all there will agree it was a successful, enjoyable, friendly time and well worth a return visit.

Barry and Kathy White – Free Spirit.

