

However it came about that the words of the Club Anthem were published in *Mini World* in June 2008 it was certainly appropriate. 'Moken up the Middle' - a title for the adventure chosen by Laura Piccari - certainly convinced us that in our Mokes we are released from worldly pressures, the wind does whistle around our neck and ears and we are in a club of special folk.



A bunch of them gathered at Glenn Golds' in Lilydale at 8:45 on the morning of May 31st to wave off the intrepid adventurers:

- ◆ Glenn Golds in Sweet Pea (the Old Hoon)
- ◆ Bob Higgins in Jersey Caramel
- ◆ Scott Markby & Laura Piccari in Smoken
- ◆ Dave, Merryn & Ryan Pullen in Slomat
- ◆ Jill & Allen Whatmore in Scruffy
- ◆ Doug Williams in Black Douglas

(Gerry Batt joined us at Ouyen in Yella Fella at the end of the first day).

Following several coffees, photographs and an appropriate voicing of 'Moking There and Moking Back', the journey began at 10:00am. Alice Springs, via the Oodnadatta Track - here we come. We managed to get all the way over Mount Slide before anyone had a problem.

It was 10:45 and Scott's car needed checking - Smoken by name and smokin' by nature - but that wasn't the problem. Slomat wouldn't restart. Unfortunately this became a day of difficulties for Dave, which included his trailer spitting 3 wheel studs and his credit card expiring - the replacement being home on the bench with the iPod. Although Glenn was able to purchase new bolts in Seymour, Dave's woes were not over, and by lunch on the second day he took the decision to leave the convoy and limp home through Mildura. That's a story only Dave can retell. He was devastated of course, but we were all delighted that he and the family were able to fly up to Yulara later and meet us in Alice.

We did have other problems on the 6000+ kilometre journey, for example, a few punctures, exhaust brackets needing replacement, Gerry's manifold working loose, Black Douglas filling its air cleaners with oil, chucking a wobbly in its tuning and spitting a wheel stud (fortunately not all at the same time), Bob doing a rather dramatic tyre shred and Scruffy being very naughty about keeping its throttle spring in place, but absolutely minor considering the conditions, the distance and the age of the vehicles. Well one exception to that. Smoken didn't quite make the whole circuit. Scott knew his engine was a bit doubtful before he left, and to its credit it played the game all the way up and most of the way back. However, Woomera was too much for it - must have been the site of the rockets in the park - and it created a hole in its #2 valve, or perhaps piston. RACV Total Care to the rescue and Scott and Laura were home safely, with Smoken following later.

The Track was a great challenge and worth every minute of the two days of hard rally driving it took to conquer it. It has three parts:

- ◆ Lyndhurst to William Creek - rough
- ◆ William Creek to Oodnadatta - tough
- ◆ Oodnadatta to Marla - BA

Don't let anyone tell you it's a doddle. Those who do haven't driven through the last 50kms or so which has a bit we christened Boulder Alley. At least 10kms of nothing but boulders from tennis ball to soccer ball size. One managed to make a crater in the quarter inch steel sump guard under Black Douglas. Just to round off the 400 kilometres we did that day, the last 5kms of Boulder Alley was completed almost totally blind. Driving into the setting sun, unable to see the vehicle in front or the track on the ground because of the reflection off the bonnet, the glare straight ahead and the dust coating over the windscreen from earlier in the day. We were very glad to reach Marla and rejoin the bitumen.

From here, the journey became more of a holiday. The camaraderie grew, seeing the sights became the objective, setting up and breaking camp became a routine and poetry and song began to record our travels. (Eighteen Mokees singing the Club song around the camp fire at King's Creek Station was some sort of record). We met Mokes from WA, Qld and SA in our travels and (finally) caught up with Terry Pollard who was leading a trip north beyond Alice.

It was fitting that Alice Springs, almost the geographical centre of the country, was the place where most of the Mokes and Mokees came together. As well as Dave and the family catching up there, Richard Durance trucked Purple Passion up so he and son Lachlan could drive back with us, and Doug's son, Scott, flew up to spend a couple of days with his dad and the pack. He soon caught the flavour of the whole event and the night before he left sang us a great song - to the tune of 'Botany Bay' - capturing special things about each of the team. The gathering of Mokes in Alice was recorded by the Centralian Advocate with a photo of 11 Mokes on page 13 of the June 17th edition and by the end of the photo shoot there were actually 15 visiting Mokes and one local lined up along Anzac Hill.

No wonder that at Coober Pedy on the return journey the bush telegraph informed us there were dozens of Mokes all over the Centre and some had been seen as far away as Broken Hill!

With Smoken being left at Woomera and Gerry peeling off at Port Augusta to visit family in Perth, the main part of the journey was done. However we still managed a couple of memorable events before arriving home about 7:00pm on Friday June 20th. The highlight was probably lining up the 'Final Five' on the forecourt of the National Motor Museum, but followed closely by trying to sleep through a disco and darts night at the Pinnaroo Pub on the last night and paying the owner back by knocking him out of bed in the morning to shift his vehicle that was blocking us all into the backyard of the pub.

Everyone will have their own stories to tell - including Bob, who has learnt he is a poet and a lyricist - but perhaps 'Moken up the Middle' can be summarised with a new verse for the Anthem as follows:

***New verse for Moken up the Middle, 31/05 - 20/06/2008***

(Tune: Hymn to Joy, Beethoven)

In our Mokes we drove to Alice  
with a bunch of guys and girls.  
We drove north through Oodnadatta.  
Rocks and sand and dusty swirls.  
Camping out and climbing canyons,  
travelling as a Mokee pack.  
All who asked were told that we were  
Moking there and Moking back!

Doug. Williams, MOA 2L

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*Moken up the Middle* logo designed by Scott Markby and Laura Piccari