British & European Automobile Club
(Southern Highlands NSW) Inc.
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BEACon February 2022

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Bob Payne (1940 – 2021)

The recent passing of Bob Payne has been a sad event for all that knew him. He had a successful career in a number of fields unrelated to automobiles, but in this newsletter we would like to focus on his tremendous contribution to the ongoing success of BEAC.

Rob Turner, current BEAC Webmaster and fellow foundation member of the club, provided the following brief profile of Bob's involvement:

'Bob Payne was part of the initial informal group known as HEMA (Highlands European Motoring Aficionados), prior to the incorporation of BEAC.

A core group of 36 people from the former HEMA became founder members of BEAC. Bob was BEAC Founder Member No. 36.

Bob attended the inaugural gathering of HEMA, held at founding President Martin Frosh's property at Fitzroy Falls. Bob can be seen in the left background (with sunglasses) in this picture of the event

He attended early runs in his former Austin Healey 100.

Photo: Rob Turner

As I recall, Bob subsequently sold the Austin Healey 100 and acquired his former Triumph Stag so that his grand-daughter Abbie could accompany he and Pam on runs (the Austin Healey only being a two seater).'

Bob's beautiful Stag, one of the best in the country.

Bob with Geoff Wood and the Edneys at a club run to Burrawang Village Store.

Following is an abridged version of the address made by current BEAC President Geoff Wood at Bob's funeral:

'In February 2006, a meeting was held by a group of local people to discuss forming a new car club. Robert (Bob) Payne was accepted as a founding member of BEAC in March 2006.

In April 2012 Bob Payne was elected president of the club. He remained president for seven years, retiring due to ill health in September 2019.

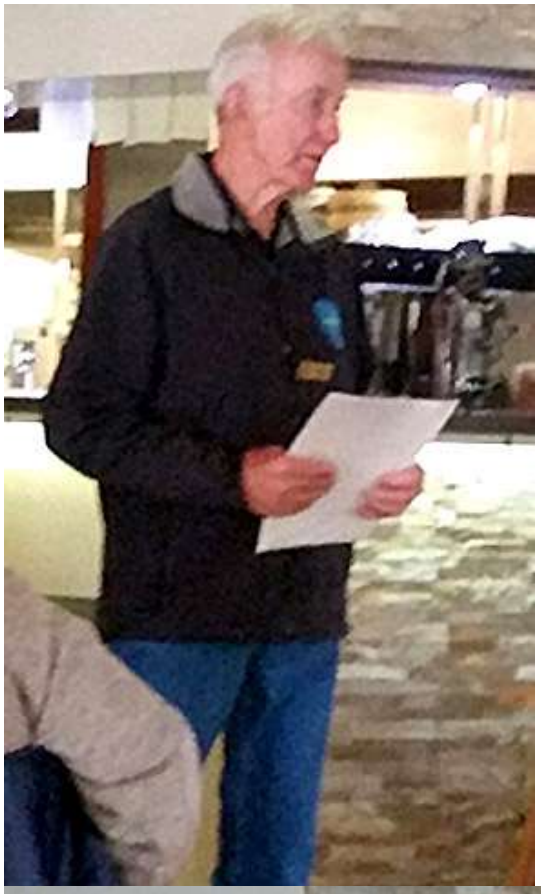
He was made a life member of BEAC on Wednesday 18th September 2019, in recognition of his service to the club over thirteen years.

Bob owned various classic cars, including an Austin Healey 100, Triumph TR7 and a Triumph Stag.

He welcomed everyone to BEAC and was passionate about his cars. He worked tirelessly for the club and his automobile knowledge and willingness to help will be sadly missed by all members.'

Bob with the BEAC committee members in 2019.

Bob presenting BEAC's cheque for buying hay bales for local livestock during the long drought in 2018.



Life membership presentation at Bistro 146 in September 2019

As BEACon editor, I would like to add my own personal perspective on Bob's time as president of the club:

'My memories of Bob Payne are mainly centred around being a committee member during his presidency of the club. I had been a member of BEAC less than a year when Bob shanghaied, er, asked me to do the club newsletter. Bob always knew who he wanted to perform a particular role and once asked, there was no turning back. (Actually this edition of BEACon marks six years that I have been churning them out – how time flies!)

Once on the committee and observing Bob in action, I soon realised he had the ideal qualities to lead the club – he had his own firm views on how things should be done but was also sympathetic to the views of others. He had a very clear understanding of the aims and the culture of the club, as set up in the constitution, and one knew that we would not be diverted from the club's objectives while Bob was in charge. He had no time for unnecessary officialdom and bureaucracy, but still ran a tight ship, and you knew that while Bob, and then secretary Tom Currie, were in charge, we were in very safe hands indeed.

Bob was also a people person (another good quality for a president), welcoming and friendly to all. He had a sharp sense of humour in the classic Aussie style. A good example of this is how he, with a straight face but a wink in his eye, would wind up the MGB drivers in the group, talking about the numerous ways in which his Triumph Stag was superior to their cars.

Bob was also aware of BEACs role in the local community, and during the severe drought of 2018, suggested that the club should aid struggling local farmers by donating money to buy hay bales to feed their livestock.

I remember how surprised I, and others, were when Bob suddenly announced his resignation from the presidency. But Bob had seen the storm clouds gathering, and typically, took decisive action. He knew who he wanted to replace him, and moved rapidly to ensure continuity of governance.

I know that I speak for all the club's committee members past and present, and most club members, in saying that we will miss him a lot.

Phil O'

FOR SALE

THE MGB GT OF PROVENANCE

1968 MARK 1 MGB GT

ORIGINAL OLD ENGLISH WHITE

Left factory production in UK 17th August 1967, imported to Australia 1968

UK Heritage certificate confirms original specifications

Still intact for exterior, interior trim, seats and motor.

Five fastidious owners in Australia
being three Engineers/ Mechanics, Qantas Pilot and Heritage Architect
.

Full Registration until 1st January 2023

On original 1969 registration number plates KKD 190

Full 53 years' historical file, last 10 years' service and genuine replacement parts file, spares and accessories available.

Four speed manual with overdrive.

Chrome wire wheels.
Tyres good condition
Reliable start and runs well.
Electronic ignition and fuel pump.
New black leather seats, black interior trim with red piping to original specifications.
Bowral location

One of the last UK Mark 1 MGB GT models made. Mark 1 Production ceased October 1967

PRICE $ 35,000

Owner has been BEAC member for past 15 years. More photos upon request.
Contact Donald Johnston on 0412428207 email: johnston@acenet.com.au

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CLUB CALENDAR – February and March 2022

- **Runs start at 10 am at Cnr. Osborne Road & Moss Vale Road, Burradoo unless otherwise noted.**
- **Please Note: all PDF files and links are available on the club's Events Web Page**

March 2022

Sunday 6 March 2022 | Canberra Region | Shannons Wheels Display Day
• Venue | Queanbeyan Showground, Glebe Ave, Queanbeyan

• Time | from 10 am to 1.30 pm
• Download | Wheels 2022 Flyer PDF

The club has proposals for runs starting on the 9th February, but these have not been agreed to at the time of BEACon's publishing. When the restart has been organised, members will be informed via email and the run details will appear on the 'Events' page of our website.

A great story

Club members Chris and Jenelle Brangwin have provided BEACon with a marvellous article about an epic trip by road from Mumbai to London that they undertook in 2001. They also provided us with this short profile:

'Chris and Jenelle have been members of BEAC for nearly 12months. They live in Bowral having come to the Southern Highlands in December 2019 from Kangaroo Valley.

Currently they own an MGB 1968 *(which I always seem to photograph from behind because I like the car's snazzy steering wheel - Ed).*

Chris previously had an Alvis 12/50 1926 TE model, an MG TC and another MGB. He is delighted to be a member of BEAC and has enjoyed many great runs to date.

He and Jenelle are keen to make a contribution to BEAC.

VW Kombi Trip – Mumbai to London

Jenelle and Chris Brangwin

(Some photo images by Clif Barker)

It all started as an idea way back in 1990. We were travelling in Bhutan and Nepal with a group of friends, two of whom had driven a kombi from London to Australia way back in the 60's. Why don't we do it again, this time in reverse?

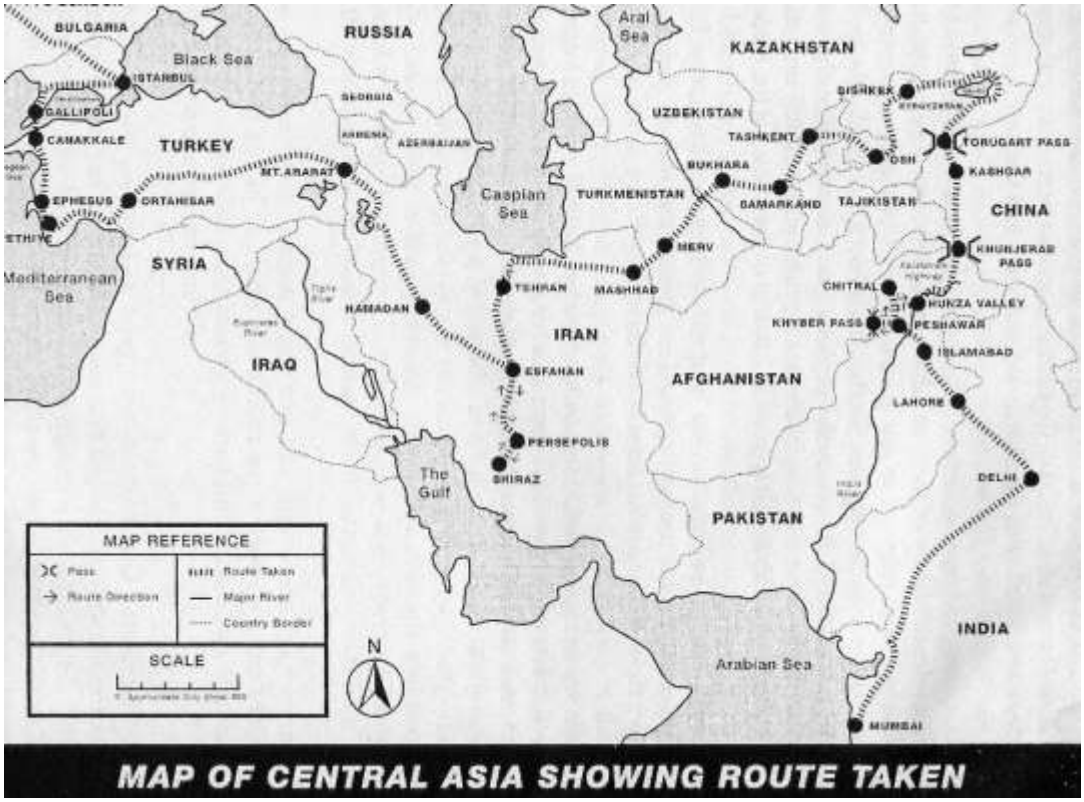
It sounded like a great plan, but we knew it would have to wait until we had time; long-service leave or retirement.

Four of us, Clif and Angie Barker and Chris and Jenelle Brangwin, decided it was a serious idea. We had all had kombis before, and over the next few years Clif started buying and fitting out two more. The results were two, well-fitted, comfortable and extremely efficient 4-wheel drive Kombis that were rearing to test themselves against whatever hardships Central Asian roads could offer.

Both were the rare 4WD 'Syncro" versions of the VW T3 one ton delivery van. To achieve full time 4WD they employed a horrible viscous clutch in the drive train, which slipped to accommodate the difference in speed between the front and rear wheels. The viscous clutch self-destructs at about 100km. The drive train then becomes 'solid' which leads to the destruction of the gearbox and diff! For Syncro duty the engines were maxed out to 2200cc – water jackets around the cylinders replaced the traditional air-cooling fans. This underpowered mechanical nightmare was augmented by a tangle of hoses of great length that then joined up the water jackets of the rear engine to the car heater and radiator, which, of course, were up the front.

2001 was to be the year; by then three of the four of us would be 60 and retiring and the other close to it.

A year or more of close planning was needed. We didn't want to just drive straight to London. We wanted to visit the legendary cities of the old Silk Road, and we wanted to drive the Karakoram Highway, one of the most spectacular routes in the world as it climbed between the Himalayas and Hindu Kush. That meant driving through Central and Northern Pakistan and western China.



MAP OF CENTRAL ASIA SHOWING ROUTE TAKEN

Crossing China was the biggest and most expensive stumbling block. The Chinese Embassy in Canberra had never heard of anyone doing such a thing; they even had to search for the area on a map. But eventually after we had procured a Chinese guide, bought Chinese registration plates and paid for Chinese insurance, we were given permission.

We also had to plan to cross the Khunjerab Pass in the Himalayas as soon as the snows melted in early May, provide the Chinese with a specific date to cross the border, and yet be through the scorching deserts of Turkmenistan and Iran before high summer hit. Visas had to be used in a certain time frame, so that made planning even tighter.

Finally, the day came when we shipped the Kombis to Mumbai, filling them with all our camping equipment and essentials. We decorated the outside of the vans with stencilled greetings to the people whose countries we would be visiting – in Hindi, Urdu, Russian, Arabic, Turkish and the obligatory red kangaroos on the front and back of each vehicle.

After having cleared the frustrations of Indian bureaucracy in Mumbai, we headed directly for the Pakistani border and Lahore. We diverted briefly to Taxila, the ancient capital of the area in the days of Alexander the Great, and the Khyber Pass to gaze down into Afghanistan. We had promised our families we wouldn't go there as there was still some fighting going on, but Clif and Chris were very tempted. We were in the North-West Frontier Province, one of the most lawless areas on earth, and where a few months later Osama bin Laden and his men would hide-out. We had to have an armed soldier with us as we drove through this

heavily fortified area.

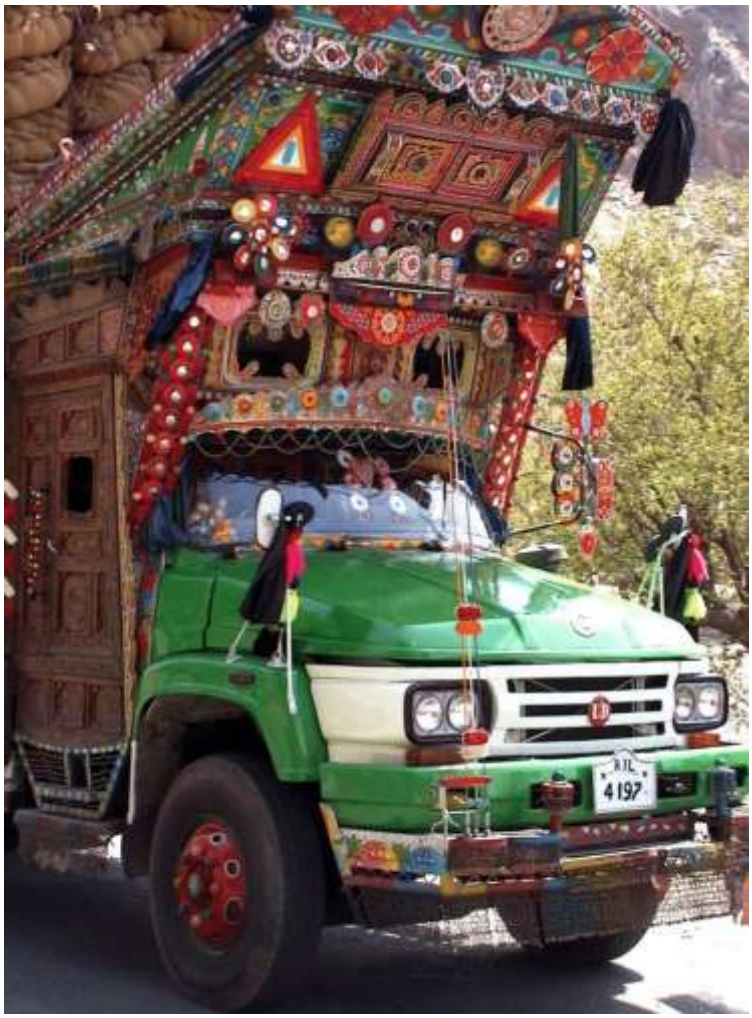
As we headed north from Peshawar for the Chitral Valley the countryside became very fertile and green. It was here we first encountered the Taliban. We had spent an evening with, amongst others, a very pleasant unemployed teacher and poet, who, in between lots of singing and laughing, spoke to us of the corruption of the government and the huge unemployment and lack of infrastructure. The next morning we saw them on the back of trucks, wearing black turbans, and waving the black and white Taliban flags, off to a Taliban

rally. We saw this sight again and again in northern Pakistan, but at no time did we feel in danger. Little did we know what was ahead for the world.

Our decision to go into the Chitral Valley, a very isolated valley in the north of the country, put the Kombis to their first real test. We had to cross the treacherous Lowari Pass. We had been told to allow three and a half hours for the 70-kilometre drive, and we quickly found out why. The road was little more than a jeep track, deeply rutted and crossed in several places by fast-flowing streams. Nasty looking drop offs plunged to the rocks below. A broken-down truck caused an hour's manoeuvring for the built-up traffic to pass. Cars and trucks slipped and slid towards the edge as they tried to grip the narrow strip of mud around the breakdown. But the grunt of our kombis 4-wheel drives allowed us to force our way around all the breakdowns, and then up and up through the middle of glaciers spilling across the road till we reached the summit at 3118 metres. The road down the other side was worse. Then a few days later and after heavy rain we had to repeat the whole operation in reverse. After that, we felt we could tackle anything.

It was good practice for the Karakoram Highway, which came immediately after. This is a two lane 1200 km highway from Rawalpindi in Pakistan to Kashgar in China, over the

Khunjerab Pass at 4730 metres. The pass is closed by snow from October to May, and landslides floods and glaciers work together to keep it closed as much as possible. To cross this had been one of the main purposes of our trip. We had heard so much about its horrors and grandeur, and the awe it inspired in everyone who travelled along it.



Driving conditions were horrendous; buses and trucks came hurtling crazily towards us, around corners with only room for one on a road hewn out of the side of the mountains overlooking the Indus Valley far below. The sheer drop-off was nerve wracking. The grandeur was amazing, we didn't want to see the bottom and we could only see the top by craning our necks upwards. We passed many slip areas, huge slopes of rocks stretching above us waiting to go, which sometimes they did.

We had to be at the Chinese border on the 9th May. On the 8th May we were at the Pakistani Border, 85 ks from the

Chinese border post, with some of the worst conditions to come and landslides reported on the road ahead. We managed to skirt those, avoid a few rocks that hurtled down the mountainside, skirted a huge lump of ice just sitting in the middle of the road and finally reached the top of the pass, and achieved one of our goals. The two kombis had managed to make it up this mountain in the thin air; they had come through with flying colours. We were at 4730 metres and felt as though we were on top of the world. Far below us we could see the red dot of the Chinese flag.

We had found Pakistan to be beautiful and the people incredibly friendly and we were sad to be leaving. But China was waiting.

We had no idea if our guide and registration papers really would be waiting for us at the border; without them we would not be allowed to enter China. Such a lonely, windswept outpost did not inspire much confidence. Our worries were for naught, but our days of freedom were over, as we were now under constant escort. After many bureaucratic delays and obstacles thrown in our path, we finally were given our papers and Chinese registration plates, and started down the mountains towards Kashgar, in the heart of Uyghur territory.

Kashgar had been a must in our planning right from the beginning. Cut off from Central Asia by towering mountain ranges and from China by the huge Taklamakan Desert, this town has always been one of the most isolated on earth, but it had been a centre of the Silk Road. In 2001, its population was still predominantly Uyghurs, Uzbeks and Kyrgyz, with the Han Chinese starting to make serious inroads. The newer part of the town looked like any other Chinese town, but in 2001 the Old City was still very much alive. It was like stepping back to another world; narrow streets, no cars, pollution or screeching of horns. Instead, noise of another kind, of people talking and laughing and bargaining, donkeys braying, the tap, tap of the coppersmith's hammer, the buzz of the carpenter's saw; old Kashgar at work as it had been for centuries. Shops and stalls squeezed together selling everything you can imagine. It was so vibrant, but now it has been torn down as the Chinese try to homogenise the region.

The next border crossing promised to be as difficult as the previous. Again, we had to be met on the border by a Kyrgyzstan guide, all pre-arranged. Once again, we had to climb another mountain pass over 3000 metres and it was freezing. This had been the old Sino-Russian border in the days before the break-up of the Soviet Union, with its old water tanks where we'd been told people had had to sleep if they hadn't arranged to be met officially. But our Russian guides were there to meet us, thank goodness, as all the many forms we had to fill in were in Russian and we couldn't understand any of them.

The Kyrgyz had always been nomadic horseman, famous for their horsemanship, and in this part of Kyrgyzstan nothing had changed. We could be nowhere else but on the high steppes of the Central Asian plateau, and falling snow just added to the atmosphere. We camped next to an old lonely caravanserai, or staging post for the ancient camel trains, and there were horses everywhere, the horsemen with white felt Kyrgyz hats and high boots. Once

again, we felt we had stepped back in time.

Kyrgyzstan is beautiful; the Switzerland of Asia, but it lacks any modern infrastructure. The road from the capital, Bishkek, to Osh in Uzbekistan, is supposed to run through the most stunning scenery in Kyrgyzstan, but we saw none of it. When we reached the first foothills we came to a barrier across the road. The road was only open between 23 hours and 07 hours because of roadworks, which had been going on for two years! As it was still only 10:00am, we had a few hours to fill in, the only place to wait being a squalid lay-by. Here we had our first Kombi mishap, when an old iron pipe protruding from the ground ripped the tire of Chris' Kombi. At least we had plenty of time to fix it.

Lunch with a view - Kyrgyz style. Just cop those distant mountains.

Even scoring petrol can be a bit of an adventure. When you can find a servo that has any, that is. The claimed 76 octane brew (more like kero than petrol) is likely to be delivered in plastic buckets. Roads populated thinly by ancient basket-case Ladas on baldies -

By 10:00pm cars and trucks were queuing up at the barrier. By 10:30pm the scene was a cross between a refugee breakout and the start of Le Mans with hundreds of decrepit vehicles lined up, five abreast, waiting for the 11:00pm starting flag. Families of six were crammed into tiny four-seater sedans, many of which, being Russian cars, had their bonnets up or were being pushed to start. Petrol was being poured into tanks from Coca-Cola

bottles. Engines revving madly the cars pushed forward as the barrier was lifted, but only one car was allowed through at a time. This scenario had obviously been acted out night after night for a very long time. When we finally got to the barrier it was immediately slammed down again. The guard needed some pecuniary enticement. The furious reaction from the car behind forced the guard to raise the barrier, but we were forced over to the side as soon as we were through. In a moment of chaos, we seized our chance and put our feet on the accelerators and went.

So started the nightmare drive of all time. We joined a long line of cars inching their way over the mountain pass, grinding through the night in first and second gear. Most of it was just bone-shaking hell. Cars were stopping everywhere, laden down old Russian Ladas, all boiling over, passengers spilled out on the edge of the snow-covered road. Overtaking crawling, unlit trucks obliterated by their own smokescreen of black oil presented a major challenge. The road went unceasingly upward. The oil light kept coming on in Clif's kombi. One feature of this kombi was that the oil pressure switch was next to the muffler. Thus, when things became seriously hot, e.g. on a long steep climb, the pressure switch would break down and give out an oil pressure alarm (augmented by a LOUD buzzer). Clif managed to replace the switch with one from a Lada - such ignominy.

We finally hit the top of the first pass, only to be confronted with another roadblock, with more demands for money. Clif refused to pay, and the cars piled up behind us. Things started getting ugly as the frustrated drivers started rocking our vans and trying to open the doors. It was 2:00 am and we were on the top of a freezing mountain surrounded by a hostile crowd. Eventually we persuaded Clif to pay and we were through.

The road didn't improve, awash with water in places. Sheer adrenalin kept Clif and Chris going. Eventually after crossing another pass we got to the bottom and off the mountain at about 4:30am. It was the longest 110 k we had ever driven.

Being stopped by police wanting bribes became commonplace and we developed several ploys to avoid it. But in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, it went one step further when Chris and Jenelle were picked up by the police on a railway station and taken away for questioning. It was rather scary for a while, especially as none of us could understand the others, but after much miming, searching through every article we were carrying, the police finally let us go without a cent passing hands.

Tashkent aside, Uzbekistan was marvellous; the glories and history of Samarkand and Bukhara making up for any belligerence of officials.

Obtaining visas for these Central Asian countries threw up all sorts of delaying problems, which are a story in themselves, but our Turkmenistan visas, secured with great difficulty, only allowed us to cross the country in a direct route to Iran, in a specific number of days, with no divergence allowed. The border crossing, like all others around here, took hours of frustration. Turkmenistan was hot, desolate, desert and we were pleased when we finally crossed it into Iran. The contrast was remarkable. Here we were welcomed with smiles and friendliness, which, apart from minor incidences, continued the whole time we spent in the country.

But it was also the country where we had our scariest moment.

We were camped by an isolated oasis in the middle of the desert and were woken by voices outside and banging on the side of the Kombi. Chris peered through the window and saw men with rifles. They were in uniform, which didn't really mean anything. He opened the door to immediately have a Kalashnikov shoved in his chest. The shock on the faces of the police/soldiers must have equalled ours. They certainly hadn't expected to see two tousled grey heads belonging to Westerners. Chris took advantage of the stunned silence informed the soldiers we were Australian and slammed the door closed. With a parting "good night". After much muttering the soldiers withdrew. The one word we had understood was "mujahedeen" and indeed, we found out the next day that that was who they had been looking for; but for a while there we were very worried.

We loved Iran, but then crossed through Kurdish territory under the shadow of Mt Ararat and into Turkey and here troubles began. For the first and only time things were stolen from our campsite. The next day we had a broken windscreen. The cost of petrol jumped from 11 cents a litre in Iran to $2:00. But these problems were wiped out by some of the most stunning scenery of the entire trip.

As we left the mountains and hit the coast of the Mediterranean, we felt we were in another world. We had left behind the vast open spaces, the isolation of Central Asia and the lack of tourists for good and entered another dimension. We were back in the domain of global development and we weren't sure we were ready for it. However we were most certainly ready to pay a visit to Anzac Cove.

When we left Istanbul, we said farewell to Asia and crossed into Europe. After years of planning and months of driving we had reached the end of our long journey along the Silk Road. It seemed incredible to us that we had actually driven that far.

We still had to drive across Europe to London, and here, back in the relative civilization of Romania, our Kombi decided enough was enough. . It was apparent that our guardian angels were working overtime. We pulled up at a servo and became enveloped in steam. Another couple of ks and the engine would have been cooked. A moulded rubber elbow of differing diameter at each end had blown. Where

on earth would one find such an esoteric bit of kit? In the glove box of course - put there by the previous owner 'just in case'. Such a thoughtful chap!

Clif decided to try to get the vans to Germany where he had contacts who could help with a German VW mechanic. So, we started a marathon drive limping across four countries to the small town of Heschingen in Germany. Clif had worked closely with a company here and they were able to recommend a VW workshop. We were completely happy to have a few days to relax whilst repairs were made.

After that we headed fairly quickly to England as Europe had never been seen as anything more than a transit route for this trip.

Our great trip was over. We felt we had achieved so much. We had crossed the mighty Karakoram Highway, defying all those who said the Kombis would never make it. We had driven 20,000ks over some of the worst roads in the world. We were not mad, we were sixty and we had done it.

HISTORIC VEHICLE SCHEME

• For members with BEAC Primary Historic Vehicle Registration, on a club run you must keep either a Club BEACon Newsletter or BEAC Events Web Page print-out in the car to justify the use.

HISTORIC CONDITIONAL REGISTRATION - 60 DAY LOG BOOK SCHEME
A reminder that it is a condition of the 60 Day Log Book Scheme to sign off on your RMS Log Sheet **BEFORE** making a non-club run journey. Severe penalties apply.
Members with cars registered under the Historic Vehicle Scheme are expected to attend a minimum of **four** Runs / Events per year.

Additional information covering the Historic Vehicle Registration 60 Day Log Book Scheme can be found on the BEAC website https://www.beac.org.au/historic-vehicle-scheme/historic-vehicle-scheme-60-day-log-book-scheme/

Please note: if you sell a car that is noted on the BEAC Member's Register, please inform our Membership (and Historic Plates) Registrar of the sale. If in doubt whether the car is on the Register, tell him anyway at registrar@beac.org.au (he won't be offended)!

MOTORING MIRTH

Thank you to all contributors to this edition.