



# Alfisti Spring Tour 2024



## “Forays in the Hunter”

Words: Peter Atkinson | Photos: Leon Cottle (unless noted otherwise)

The *Alfisti Spring Tour 2024* was jointly organised by the Alpine Alfisti and AROCA Victoria and provided eight days of glorious Spring touring from Central Victoria through the Riverina, Hilltops, NSW Central West, Hunter Valley and Blue Mountains to Canberra between 15<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

Thirty Alfisti in seventeen Alfas participated in this year’s Alfisti Spring Tour. They came from far and wide: Toowoomba, Melbourne, Canberra, Benalla and even Ballarat! And they came in Alfas that were just as diverse: 3 x 105s, an Alfasud, a 156 V6, a 147 JTDm, a 916 GTV V6, a GT V6, a Brera, a Spider, a Stelvio and a bevy of Giulias - including two QVs. Did we mention that there was also a green one?

The 2024 Spring Tour commenced in Kialla at the *Museum of Vehicle Evolution (MOVE)*, just south of Shepparton, and was followed by lunch at the *Milestone Café* adjacent to MOVE.



A small portion of M-O-V-E’s car display



A local who had dropped in!



Part of the Loel Thomson Costume Collection

From Kialla, the Tour route was intended to run north through Shepparton towards Yarrowonga, then east to Rutherglen. But a discussion over lunch with Andrew Inglis resulted in a rerouting of the Tour to follow the *Benalla Silo Art Trail* through Goorambat, Devenish, St James and Tungamah. The Tour then passed through the Ovens River’s wetland, near Peechelba, and on to Rutherglen.





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The silo art, especially at Goorambat, was astounding. Some of the art depictions are shown below.



Goorambat



St James



Devenish



Tungamah

The Silo Art Trail experience was well worth the detour! Thank you, Andrew.





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Rutherglen is a wonderful town – especially if you enjoy history and/or food and/or wine (in which ever order you prefer) or strolling through the town to check out the op shops or the second-hand book shop – looking for those elusive copies of Fusi or Hull & Slater ...

As is the case for Alfisti Tours, participants make their own arrangements for accommodation, but we always endeavour to meet up at a “nice” place for dinner. Everyone will have their own story about their dinner in Rutherglen, but suffice it to say, it did not quite go ‘according to plan’. But the food was mostly very good.



Gridding up for the Drivers' Briefing in Rutherglen

Day two dawned crisp and clear, though a little cool. Breaky for those that wanted, or needed it, was at the Caffein & Machines café – where breakfasters shared the space with an eclectic collection of motorcycles, art and motorcycle paraphernalia. But the coffee and the breaky was definitely very good!

At the drivers' briefing on Day 2, it was noted that after the run the previous day, one of our Tour members was apparently “over” Silo Art! To placate them all, it was promised: “No more silo art!”



Alfisti briefing in Rutherglen: “Promise: no more Silo Art!”

Was it mentioned that the itinerary still included visits to a few decorated *water towers* later that day ... ?





## *Alfisti Spring Tour 2024*



The drive from Rutherglen to Cowra on Wednesday, was the longest on the Tour and included a number of stops along the way. From Rutherglen we travelled via Howlong (but only after the tour leader 'found his bearings' and corrected an overshoot at a critical turn! It happened again later that day too, but nobody noticed the second time – or maybe they were too polite to say!) and Walbundrie to Yerong Creek, where we took a short detour to see the first of our decorated water towers. Stunning in both size and colour.

From Yerong Creek, we travelled a short distance on to Uranquinty. This was once a RAAF wartime training base, so the subject matter on this second water tower came as no surprise!



Yerong Creek



Uranquinty

Channelling Ceasar: They came, they saw, and they conveyed on ...

The Tour travelled on to Junee, taking a lunch break at the renowned Licorice & Chocolate Factory – which like their sibling in Corowa – used to be a flour mill! Adjacent to the licorice (\*) factory was an automotive and mechanical 'museum', though 'shed' might be a more apt descriptor! This one did not seem to have the drawing power of the one that we saw in Kialla the day before. In fact, so few visited, that no one was able to answer the question: "Who rode the first 10-speed ride-on-mower?" You'll have to go back if you want the answer, but suffice it to say, that the contraption and its rider will both surprise!

(\* 'licorice' is their spelling! But given that they are also purveyors of whiskey, Liquorice might be apt!)





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The uninspiring streetscape of the old flour mill except for the very nice GT out front!

Was that a bit close for comfort?

But we digress! After filling up on licorice/chocolate/ginger (while trying to avoid sampling the whiskey – we still had a long way to go that day!) and possibly bolting down a little lunch as well, it was time to head for Cootamundra.

Robyn & Graeme Snape operate a private workshop garage that they call “The Old Toy Factory” where their hobby is automotive restoration. And by golly, they have a few interesting “old toys” too! Many of the toys wear an Alfa Romeo roundel and range from 105s & 116s though to modern Alfas 147, 156 & 916.







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Though there are other marques too, like two Singer Le Mans (one is complete and running, while the second is undergoing an extensive restoration requiring a significant amount of refabrication), an Armstrong Siddeley sports tourer and several MGs as well.



Leon presenting Graeme & Robyn with a token of the Alpine Alfisti's appreciation

Oh, to have a shed like the Old Toy Factory ...

From Cootamundra we followed the highway via Young to Cowra. It was mid-afternoon when we left Cootamundra, so there were no stops or detours along this part of the journey. Dinner that night in Cowra was at the *Marsala Library by Sid*. The fare was Indian, and the food was delicious and plentiful. From the level of noise that we generated that night, it would be fair to say that everyone enjoyed the evening.

Thursday morning was intended as a leisurely or late start for the days touring. After all, we were in Cowra which is the home of the famous and magnificent Japanese Gardens which was open for casual visiting.

Thursday's Tour took us from Cowra to Mudgee, with an obligatory stop in Bathurst along the way. First off, we had to cater for some necessary refuelling – of people not vehicles!

For those that had visited the Gardens that morning, it had already been a long day without sustenance. So, the *Harvest Café* was our first port of call for a bite to eat and it also provided the first opportunity for a group photo!





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Alfisti Spring Tour group outside the Harvest Café in Bathurst

Following lunch we commenced a careful (read: the *red mist* of enthusiasm was consciously, if unwillingly, suppressed!) *Lap of the Mountain* (or was it two, or maybe even three laps?).

On one of those laps, we even managed to corral all of the Alfas at the top of the Mountain for a photo!



Alfa Skyline @ Mount Panorama

photo: David Roberts

After the photoshoot, we all headed back down the Mountain for a visit to the *National Motor Racing Museum*.



Buried in all that dross is an important white Alfa!





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The Gil Gordon GTV 2000 Group C Touring Car

OK, duty done, we were now off to Mudgee. Dinner was at the *Mudgee Brewing Co* and while we apparently arrived the day before they were expecting us, they seemed to cope exceptionally well with the larger than expected crowd. All credit to them; the service was excellent, and the meals very good.

The next overnight stop was the first of three nights in the Hunter Valley. We all left Mudgee (eventually \*) and headed for Pokolbin with a midway stop at Fresh in Denham for lunch. "Fresh" by name and fresh by nature – the quality and quantity of their lunch time faire was commented on favourably by many.

Why "eventually"? Well, one of the many 105s on the Tour decided, come Friday morning, that it wasn't happy and, as they say in the classics, 'it failed to proceed'! It seems it did not like Mudgee's damp and moist air.







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After many heads had bent under the bonnet, got scratched (the heads, not the bonnet), and after yet more pontification - a diagnosis (let alone a solution) appeared no closer! But, rather than hold everyone up, a small band of those who 'knew something about 105s' (and their partners) stayed back to help, while the rest of the Tour group were sent on their way to the Hunter Valley.



The perplexed pontificators

Meanwhile, back under the bonnet of the 105, parts were being removed, polished, tested where possible, and then replaced, but still to no avail. One member of the group was then despatched (with samples) to purchase several replacement parts – just in case. On returning with the new parts, the NRMA Man (who had unfortunately arrived while the parts were absent!) took the 'old parts' reassembled them, and said "Try that" – the little 105 immediately burst back into life! And it remained completely reliable for the rest of the Tour! The new 'parts' were not wasted however, they were tested in situ and proven to be just as good as the originals, so they now reside as spares in the 105's boot. The cause? The general consensus was that the high-tension lead between dizzy and coil and/or a connector, was at fault, but was now fixed.

After a quick lunch in Mudgee, compliments of Andrew, the 105's owner, the remaining members of the Tour group all departed for Pokolbin, arriving in plenty of time for dinner at *Harrigan's Irish Pub*. Remember this was a Friday evening, and the Pub was very busy, but the service and quality of the meals served at *Harrigan's* was fantastic! So much so, that we went back again on Sunday night!

Saturday was a 'free day' in the Hunter Valley for everyone to do as they pleased. Many chose to visit the Hunter Valley Gardens and/or several wineries and even a distillery.



The only group activity planned for that day was dinner that evening at *Cypress Lakes Bistro*. Yet another venue that impressed the whole group!





## *Alfisti Spring Tour 2024*



On Sunday morning the group met at *Greg's Espresso Bar* ready for a drive to Nelson Bay and lunch at *The Deck Café* overlooking the wharf at Soldiers Point.



The view from *Greg's Espresso Bar* prior to the run to Nelson Bay

Looking around the table at the meals that had been chosen, many had not surprisingly selected seafood options. All enjoyed a very pleasant lunch.



Alfisti enjoying their lunch (more than being photographed) at the *Deck Café*, Soldiers Point





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Monday required an earlyish start as we had another long drive ahead. We met at *Enzos* for breaky, or just coffee, prior to departing the Hunter and heading for the Blue Mountains.



The Tour group at Enzos just prior to the run to the Blue Mountains

We followed the much loved (by Sydney Alfisti) Putty Road and then Bells Line of Road. While Putty Rd got the thumbs up from just about everyone, Bells Line of Rd was not so popular.



At Grey Gums Café, on Putty Rd ready for the run to the Blue Mountains

We broke the monotony of Bells' with a stop at the *Mount Tomah Botanical Gardens* – ostensibly for lunch. But burgers and coffee were about all that was on the menu, so the party split: some stayed, while the rest moved on the Medlow Bath.





## *Alfisti Spring Tour 2024*

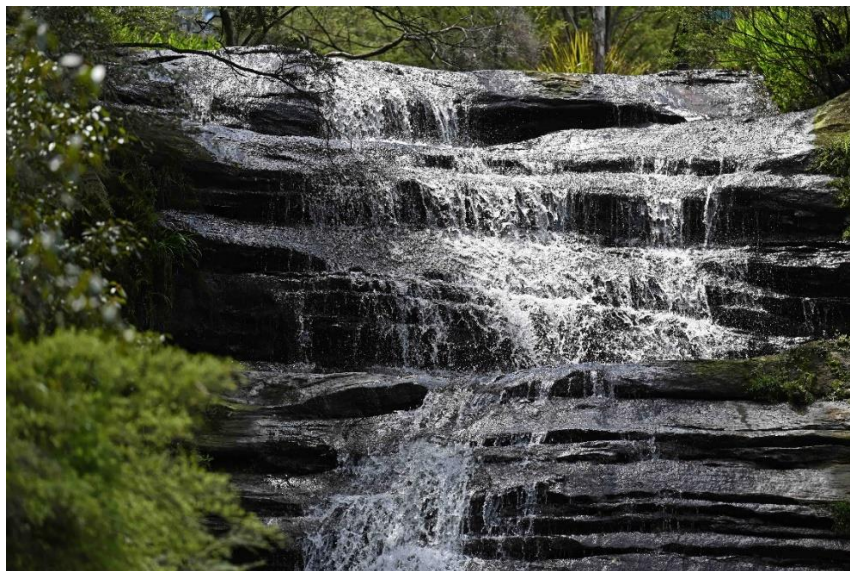


The dinner venue selected by most that evening was the *Wintergardens Restaurant* at the Hydro Majestic. The meal was amazing, and together with the incredible service, the ambiance of the historic venue and the very impressive view from their large windows as the sun was setting over the valley - it was quite a special place, especially for folk from the lowlands who were not mountain bred.

Tuesday was another free day - to explore the Blue Mountains at one's leisure. Many went sightseeing – scenic scarp and valley views, and waterfalls, were aplenty!



The view from a room (in the Hydro Majestic) overlooking the Magalong Valley



The top of the Katoomba Falls



The obligatory photo in the Blue Mountains – “The Three Sisters”





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Dinner on Tuesday was at the *Old City Bank Bar & Brasserie* in Katoomba. Dinner at the restaurant was very pleasant and with a suitably Italian theme. You could even order chianti in a raffia wrapped flask! Some of us were tempted, but none were game enough to try it – memories from the 80s prevailed!

Wednesday was to be the final day of the Tour, with the group travelling from the Blue Mountains to Canberra via Oberon, Taralga, Crookwell and Gunning. It was another longish drive, but most of was along scenic, windy, Alfa-friendly roads. The first stop was for Devonshire Tea in Oberon at the *Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway*, where we met a group of rail enthusiasts that have made amazing progress in bringing a station, its infrastructure, train engines and rolling stock back from the brink!



Devonshire Tea in the 'Tea Train'

Elaine & Michael, the 'Tea Train' hosts

We had scheduled only a short in Oberon – but that was never to be! The place and the work that has been done and the work that they have still to do is amazing, yet it was still fascinating to see it up close. Unfortunately, we did not have time to visit the Oberon Heritage Museum or the Matra Museum, all of which would have added significantly to our visit. Maybe next time?

From Oberon, we headed via Taralga to Crookwell for lunch at the Alfisti friendly **Crookwell Hotel** before embarking on the final leg to Canberra via Gunning and Gundaroo. The Tour's Finale Dinner was held at the very Italian "Agostinis" in Kingston that evening.

Use the [Alpine Alfisti](http://www.alfisti.org.au) web site (or QR code) for details of the next Tour.







## *Alfisti Spring Tour 2024*



Lunchtime in Crookwell afforded the opportunity to award several highly coveted Alfisti trophies:

First the **AROCA Alfisti Spring Tour** trophy:



To Steve & Laima: presented by Graeme Peake (AROCA Committee Member).

For perseverance and dedication to the cause - and because they were Touring in a 105!  
Steve has been participating in Alpine Tours for more than a decade, and always in his 2000 GTV.

Next, the **Alpine Alfisti *nobody-goes-further*** trophy.



To Sheridan & Garry from Toowoomba, QLD.

Sheridan & Garry joined the Tour in Kialla, having driven all the way from Toowoomba, QLD, just to be part of the fun. We won't mention the jokes and stories that Garry regaled us with - because "What happens on Tour, Stays on Tour" 😊 Following the Tour, they headed back home to prepare for the next.





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## Alfisti Spring Tour perpetual trophy



To Graeme & Lynnie Peake - for eager participation and involvement throughout the Tour.

Did we mention that Graeme & Lynnie were also doing the Tour in a 105? A Giulia Sprint GT no less!

However, there is an obligation bestowed on the winners of the perpetual trophy – they are expected to attend the next Spring Tour as they have an important role to perform – that of selecting the next recipient(s) of the perpetual trophy! *It's just a strategic method of avoiding back-to-back wins!*

Use the [Alpine Alfisti](http://www.alfacolor.org.au) web site (or QR code) for details of the next Tour ... and try not to miss it!





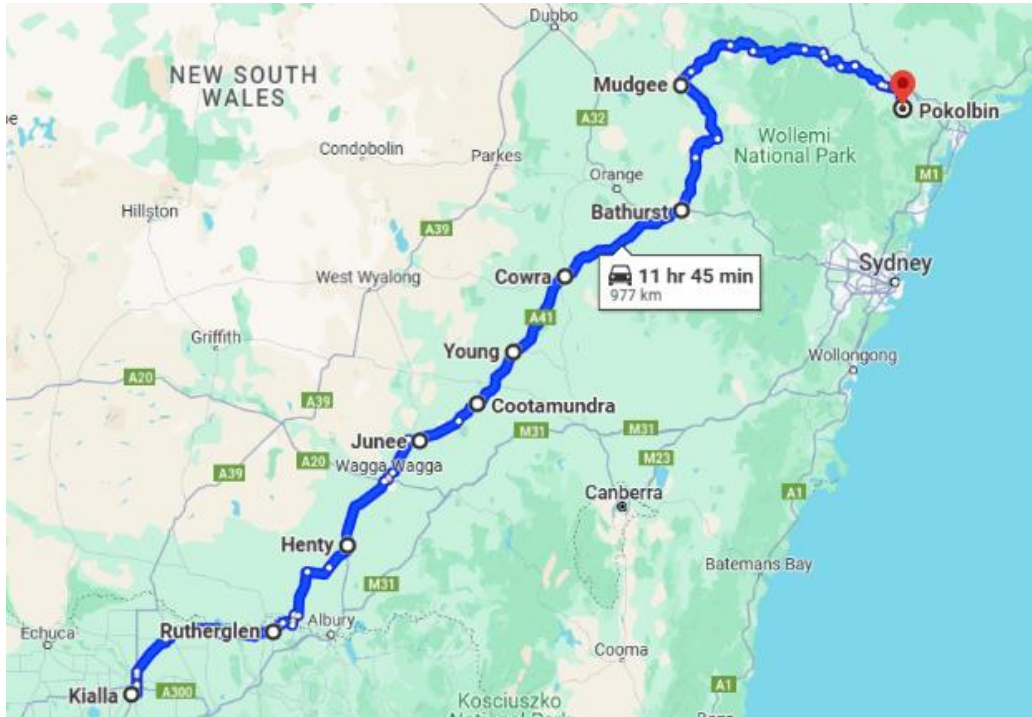


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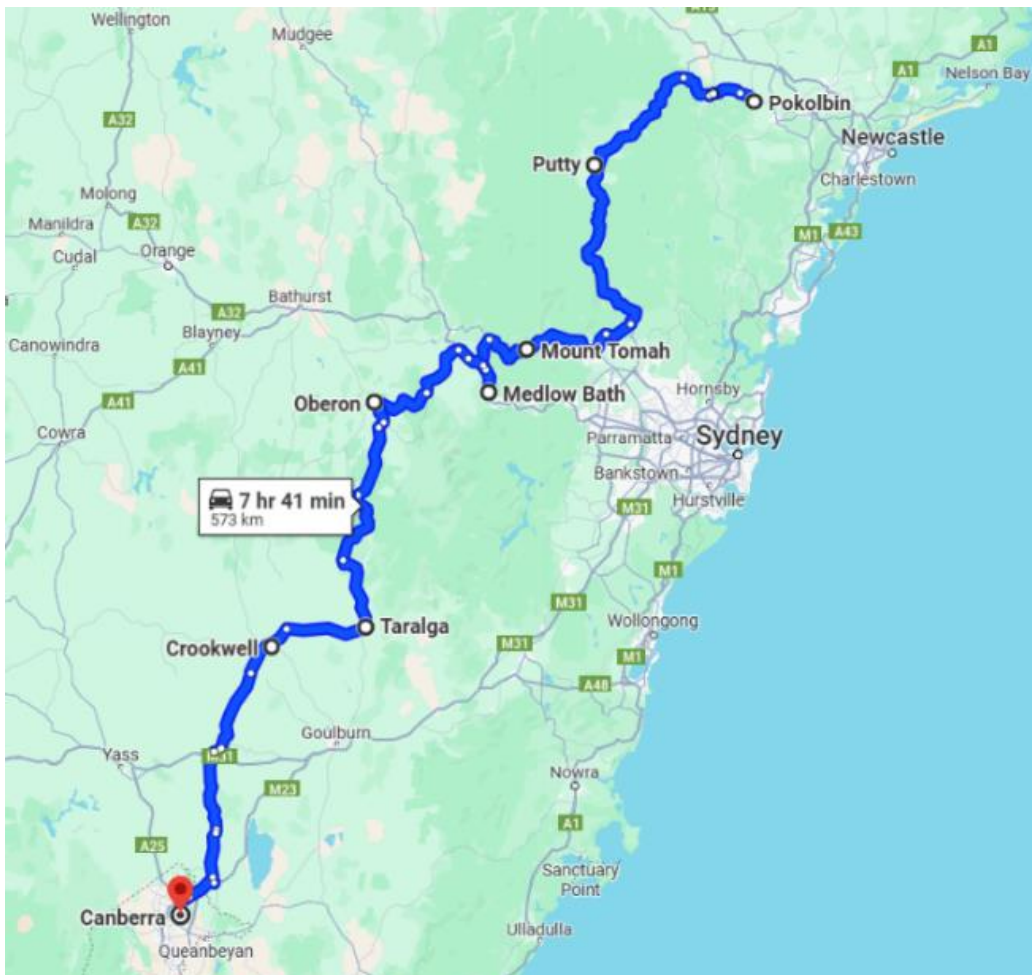


## Overview of the Alfisti Spring Tour 2024 route

### Kialla to Pokolbin ...



### Pokolbin to Canberra ...



*Click on the images to view the routes in Google Maps.*