

JAMIESON LOOP TRIP REPORT

29 and 30 January 2005.

15 miles of bad road (or good tracks) and three river crossings!

Things started off pretty well as I left sourcing some of the spares required until the last minute thinking I could pick them up at Lilydale on the way to the meeting point at Healesville. When I checked with the Ford dealer at Lilydale late on Friday to get a handle on the costs I was surprised to discover that the stock condition for the things I wanted was zero in all cases. Too late to order them in, so the all purpose repair kit of Gaffer Tape was pressed into service and Ford had a potential for finding us in a remote place if anything broke and we used the roadside call out facility available to new owners inside the warranty period. However nothing broke so we can now order the parts in, in good time for Murrindindi in a fortnight.

Calling into Emerald to pick up the Gaffer Tape put us further behind our schedule but we managed to arrive at the meeting place at the nominated time and filled up with fuel into the bargain.

Nick & Lennor were already present when we arrived and Ted, Sonja and family were close behind us. A leisurely run over the Black Spur to Taggerty (locating the meeting place for Murrindindi as we traveled) and then to Thornton where Richard, Wendy and their sons were waiting for us to arrive which we managed to do on the dot of 10:00 am.

After introductions and some dialogue about what we might do that day, we decided to make for Tunnel Bend camping ground and reassess there as the weather was beginning to look threatening. And it got gradually worse as we approached Jamieson. By Tunnel Bend the rain was constant but not too heavy so over lunch an assessment of how to proceed occurred.



**Lunch At Tunnel Bend Camping Ground.
Territory, CR-V, Kluger & X-Trail**

The consensus was to try the “Flour Bag Track”, which follows the contour lines along the path of the Flour Bag Creek for a couple of clicks before diverging towards the main road, but be prepared to back out if things got too bad. The track starts adjacent to Flour Bag Creek where it goes under the Mansfield-Woods Point road and involves a steady climb of a couple of hundred metres or so before dropping down into the valley where Gaffney’s Creek joins the Goulburn River. An electrical transmission line follows the same path making navigation pretty simple. The track was in good condition but I stopped several times to clear the worst of the brambles that overgrew the track wherever there was moisture, which was frequent. The track traverses about a dozen rivulets that take water down to the creeks, making for frequent reversals of direction. Surprisingly there were few conservation humps to negotiate but the five clicks as the crow might fly became about ten as the AWD travels to finish in the region of Knockwood Bridge.



**Wendy, Sonja, Lorna, Ted & Richard
contemplate the afternoon agenda.**

The challenge came at the end, as to get back to the main road Gaffney's Creek must be crossed and at this point there are three creek crossings to choose from. Only one gets back to the main road! We managed to choose the correct option and after Richard and Ted and Nick waded through to check depths, Lennor took the Kluger through with no difficulty. The real challenge was in the approach to the crossing, which was quite steep and had a nasty hump due to a rock about half way down. Thick brush either side made negotiating this a challenge, sliding on the rock would put you into the vegetation and some panel damage. I took the Territory through next without trouble other than apprehension due to this being the first river crossing I have done on a track. Ted followed with his CR-V and Richard brought up the rear in the X-Trail. During our crossing activities another convoy (two cars) approached from another direction. It turned out they had used the "Moonlight Track" and reported that the going was quite hard. The Patrol pilot said that this crossing was about a metre deep a couple of weeks earlier after the heavy rain that occurred then!



An X-Trail with wet feet.

Safely on the other side, it was back to the road and onward to Woods Point. We arrived in Woods Point at about 3:30 pm and after a quick appraisal made our way to the Hotel to book in for the night. It was just as well we booked as the Hotel was full except for a couple of single rooms – busy place this Woods Point!

Having forecast that they would be with us for Saturday only Ted, Sonja and their children commenced the journey home while the rest of us filled with fuel (\$1.35 per litre and rationed as supplies were running short! But the owner has to bring in his own fuel from Melbourne) ready for the next day. Hotel meals were inexpensive, large in size and tasty. A short walk after the meal gained us some information from the local police officer, who indicated that, given the rain, "Johnson's Hill Track" might be more than AWD vehicles could handle. As it turned out I think he was being cautious and attempting to avoid an emergency callout.



**Waiting to refuel at Woods Point.
\$1.35 per litre & rationed!**

Bright and sunny the next day Woods Point was a picture waiting to be taken, and many were. "Johnson's Hill" track is to be tried! After a sizable breakfast of eggs, bacon, sausage and tomato with toast (included with the tariff of \$35 per person per night!) we head off making as though we will ignore our police presence advise. But I am again prepared to back out if the going gets too hazardous. We have decided by this time that the Frenchman's gap track, Cornhill Road, Ryan Track, Cambarville Logging road option is a bit more than we can handle given the time the "Flourbag Track" took us, together with the report about the track conditions in that part of the world from the Patrol driver.

Again a track of about ten clicks distance but climbing from 640 metres at "Comet Flat" camping reserve to 1100 metres at Johnson's Hill. Many, many conservation humps to negotiate during the climb and two crossings of the Goulburn River in the first two kilometers. A refuge hut is situated just beyond the second crossing and this had been



**Testing the waters!
Richard & son Kyle get their feet wet.**

occupied the previous night. The campfire was still smouldering when we arrived with red hot embers at its core that took a couple of gallons of water to put out. No wonder we get forest fires in the high country.

The river crossings were uneventful, proving that stopping and looking before you get wet wheels is the way to avoid problems. We must have negotiated twenty conservation humps during the climb and the automatic transmissions in the Kluger and Territory allowed these to be taken at very slow speed uphill preventing suspension bounce on the far side as the car came off the hump. Richard needed to get the X-Trail's momentum up to ride over the obstacles. The 4WD brigade seem to forget about the torque multiplication that an Auto Trans provides and this coupled with first gear allows these obstacles to be crossed at less than 5 kph which seems to me to be the safe way of going about things. I'm sure 4WD drivers could get to places where I could not get the Territory out, but then I would not have gotten there in that car in the first place. All of the vehicles bottomed out at some stage, but in my case it occurred at a hump where I didn't get out and guide Lorna over the thing. There is a lesson in this! (Perhaps I weigh too much!)

The question I have is why do they build conservation humps at right angles to the track? On both tracks we used there was no room to manoeuvre the car to attack the hump obliquely, but it would not be too difficult to build the hump obliquely across the track and if you made the drop off side the lowest part of the hump it would help to shed water off the track without it pooling. User's cars would then have a safer passage across the hump tending to prevent suspension bounce and the resultant pot holes that were present on the uphill side of every hump we negotiated.

The last 800 metres of the track were the hairiest as there was a 220 metre drop over this distance. This is a lot steeper than the last track on the recent Mt Disappointment excursion and the track is a lot narrower as well. Lorna did a superb job navigating the car down this stretch. It demonstrated the importance of NOT letting your speed build up to dangerous levels. It would be so very easy to let the speed build up, hit the brakes hard and then lock up the wheels. On a slippery slope disaster is not too far away in such a situation.

I would not care to try either of the tracks we traveled after 20 mm of rain had fallen, for us, even with the rain on Saturday the tracks were quite dry except for the potholes where the humps existed.

And so along the Woods Point-Warburton road to Cumberland Junction, stopping at the Pub at Matlock Hill for "a quick half" (breathtaking views across the dividing range in all directions), where we each went our separate ways towards home and reflection.

In our case there was a surprise waiting as a wild, but trusting, King Parrot that will feed from my hand visited with his latest children, probably to show them where food is available. A fitting end to a great weekend.

All the participants enjoyed themselves, for Lorna and me it allowed us to explore some country we would never have reached previously and the capabilities of the car (and us) became more familiar.

Our thanks to Ted, Sonja, Richard, Wendy and their respective children together with Nick and Lennor for their company, advice and encouragement. I have learned a lot, put into practice some of the things I have read about and look forward to next weekend and the training activities.



One of the views from Matlock Hill

I think Lennor and Richard will post some photo's of some of our adventures. If I can get the video camera to talk to the computer I will have some movies of river crossings to post as either mpegs or avi files.

Reflections:

1. The car is more capable than I expected, but needs more clearance underneath. 70 profile tyres?
2. Woods Point Hotel is good value, inexpensive but quite adequate. Meals are very good, tasty, large serves and reasonable in cost. Hotel staff have that no nonsense country humour that is appreciated.
3. Look, Think, Look some more, Think some more - then act!
4. Don't depend on fuel at Woods Point. The garage proprietor may be going to get fuel "next Monday"!
5. If the water sloshes over the tops of my Wellingtons, it's probably too deep (It didn't and it wasn't!)
6. If in doubt, don't, go back the way you came in!
7. 5 or 6 klicks per hour is as good as you can hope for on tracks in this country, if you manage more it's just a bonus.