

Kenilworth Club Induction Weekend 23/24 May 2015
First Aid Kits and Comms
- A Cautionary Tale

With some arriving on the Friday afternoon, the rest of the new club members arrived bright and early on Saturday morning at the Kenilworth Homestead for the club weekend induction session.

The privately run homestead is situated just outside Kenilworth on the banks of the Mary River. This venue was chosen by the club for the purposes of inductions as it wasn't too far from Brisbane and includes sandy river banks for snatching, as well as various grades of bush tracks in close proximity to the camp site.

Brett had recommended the campsite recently to the club for the purposes of the inductions after it had been used as the venue for an advanced driving course which he had attended.

I brought my Father in law Ross along for the trip so that we could spend some time away and enjoy a camping weekend. He had also volunteered to be my unofficial event photographer, which meant that I could concentrate on the driving and he could enjoy one of his passions.

The morning was crisp, so at around 9am we arranged our camp chairs in a semi-circle around Brett and Molly's (and Canary's) caravan for the start of proceedings, enjoying the warm sunshine. Each new club member then introduced themselves in turn - Michael (LSB 40 series Landcruiser), myself (SWB Vitara), Block (Mitsi Pajero), Sean (Ford Courier utility), Christian (60 series Landcruiser), Chris and his girlfriend Marlise (100 series Landcruiser)

Brett as Induction Officer took the lead and provided a general introduction and an overview of the club including its history, while Grizzly and Danny interjected and provided insights from their knowledge and experience.

Brett talked about the camaraderie and support that the club members enjoy. He went further and explained that when someone needs a hand there are always club members ready to lend it. Brett told us of his preference for helping others and that helping people makes you feel good about yourself, and that's better than feeling indebted to others. I didn't realise it at the time, but before the weekend was over I too would share his view...

The theory covered some very interesting material followed closely by morning tea served by Molly which included her luscious fruit cake (without orange peel) as well as other treats like cupcakes generously provided by other club members.

After the short break it was then back into it and we covered more of the theory as well as a practical demonstration of strap joining from Brett and Grizzly, and then Danny provided an alternative technique which made it look much easier. Lunch consisted of a very tasty sausage sizzle which went down a treat. It was a great opportunity to have a chat with more of the club members.

After lunch it was time to hit the beach. But before we could do that we all required an inspection of our essential recovery gear as well as our recovery points. With a varied selection of 4WDs assembled, Grizzly and Danny checked all 7 vehicles. Michael and Christian hadn't brought their hitch receivers, and I hadn't packed a dampener blanket, nor did I have a working CB radio – a few fines were justifiably allocated and we were off.

Moving through the soft sand along the river bank we left our vehicles in their order of arrival while Brett took us through the recovery process verbally. It was then time for us to have a go at it ourselves. Some videos were taken of the various combinations and everyone did a great job recovering their assigned vehicles. Once again a few fines were issued for stepping over the live snatch strap, and one for Block whose horn wasn't working to signal the start and stop of the snatch and tow, for which he substituted a verbal Roadrunneresque "beep" over the radio.

From the beach we navigated back through the campgrounds and out the other side, driving on to some bush tracks off Kenilworth Brooloo Road. On one of the steep tracks those of us with manual transmissions tried our luck in turn at a backward stall start. Most handled it with little effort, including Sean who completed his start with a rather large tree trunk in the back of his tray that had been collected a few minutes before for that night's camp fire. Unfortunately refraining from flooring the clutch pedal out of instinct was something that I was unable to master on the day.

Back to the camp for happy hour (a little late) and there was a smorgasbord including Molly's cob loaf dip, Blocks generous platter, Chris and Marlise's pasta salad and various other treats bestowed upon those present.

Knackered from the day I was in my sleeping bag by 7, which means that this report doesn't contain any true or otherwise tales of debauchery that may or may not incriminate those who partied on into the night by a roaring fire (sorry!).

On Sunday morning I was woken by the dulcet tones of mooing cows and laughing Kookaburras. Some of us emerged from our tents at first light to prepare our breakfast meals. After a bit of a clean-up the majority of members leisurely formed a convoy, with Pugsley taking the lead and Brett and Molly falling into position as tail end Charlie. Ross and I were in second last position behind Griz.

Just after 9:30am we stopped on Cambrook Lane near the treatment plant and refuse tip prior to leaving civilisation to reduce our tire pressures and lock in our hubs. I had to borrow a radio as well as a tyre deflator...so after a few more fines allocated...we moved off into the bush.

There were some really great tracks – mostly a lot of fun for those less experienced, like myself. After a fair amount of driving we stopped on a ridgeline to stretch our legs as well as for a preview of the next track that we were planning on tackling.

I had left Ross by my car as I went up further up the ridge to witness the steep downhill descent that we were planning on navigating next – it looked like a lot of fun. There were deep ruts as well as patches of rocks scattered down the steep descent. Having had a look from several angles I went back to find Ross and ask him to take a few photos from the top. However when I got back to my car at the end of our convoy he wasn't there. Thinking that perhaps we had crossed paths on different sides of the convoy, I went back up the ridge again to look for him.

Back at the top I could see him about half way down the visible portion of the descent - only to then witness him the next moment slip and then try to regain his footing by attempting to run down the incline. He then stumbled and fell forward, landing on his front and slide about three or four body lengths before coming to a stop on his back with his head downhill and his feet up. He was now lying motionless about 150 or so meters from the top of the track

A few others also witnessed his fall including Michael who started down the track toward Ross. I yelled out to Ross, and then started my own descent down the track.

I had almost reached Ross when Michael collapsed onto the track, grabbing his ankle in obvious pain. He had heard an audible pop from his ankle joint and was now lying on the ground beside Ross.

When I got to them there was an amount of blood on the ground around Ross's head as well as a steady trickle coming out of what looked to be a nasty looking head wound. His arms were also marked with blood from various puncture wounds, lacerations and abrasions.

I yelled back to those up on the ridge that Ross was in a bad way. He seemed lucid, though he was in obvious pain and discomfort. I tried to keep him talking and engaged fearing that he may lose consciousness.

At the top few phones had reception to call an ambulance but after a bit of moving around Christian found reception from in his car. Vince was chosen to talk to the ambos as he had best knowledge of our location. The rest of the convoy then proceeded to one-by-one turn our vehicles (and those from the drivers at the bottom of the hill) around on the track.

Pauls' Jeep was the first car in line, so Danny climbed into the passenger side and they started a careful and metered descent, stopping a safe distance from us. Paul and Danny then proceeded down to us on foot with Danny's first aid kit. Danny used a saline solution to wash Ross's head injury, after which he then confirmed that the lacerations on his head were down to the bone. He got Ross to move his hands and then his feet to access the situation further. Danny yelled back to Heidi up on the ridge that we needed an ambulance. The next priority was to establish communications so that we could provide better information to all parties.

Under Paul's direction I went up to his Jeep to retrieve a hand held walkie talkie. Now we could easily communicate. Heidi confirmed that an ambulance had been called and was on route from Kenilworth. She also conveyed the message that Ross shouldn't be moved. Danny wasn't able to find a gauze pad in his kit so I went back again to Paul's Jeep to retrieve his kit to supplement our supplies. Danny then used a gauze pad on Ross's head to stem the blood flow, he also used a rolled bandage as a pillow under Ross's neck to better support his head. Blood was starting to congeal on Ross's head wound which was a good sign and he was still able to converse with us. He complained of being cold, so we covered him in a space blanket from one of the kits. We assured him that an ambulance was on its way and would be there soon.

We then started collecting some of Ross's possessions which were scattered nearby on the track. His watch had been ripped off his arm on impact and was in several pieces, and his camera had definitely seen better days.

Vince gave the GPS location to the ambos and then sent Grizzly back out to the main road in, to meet the

first response vehicle. A change in comm channel from 15 to 16 was necessary to allow Danny and first aid their own channel, a second channel for communication with Grizzly and a third channel to communicate with Brett Lonergan (who by now had a recovery situation of his own).

A short while later we received confirmation that an ambulance was out on the main road waiting to take Ross to hospital. Meanwhile a 4WD ambulance dispatched from Kenilworth emergency services was also on the approach to ferry Ross from the accident scene to the ambulance. Soon after we could hear and then see the ambulance on the track below us together with Grizzly in his Patrol (who had gone back the way the convoy had come to meet and guide the ambulance to our location).

However the ambulance took a detour off the main track as it wasn't capable of safely reversing up such a steep incline. Unaware of why the ambulance had made a detour and stopped, I volunteered to meet them down further on the track and advise our position. I returned to where Ross was lying with Griz, the paramedic and medical supplies.

The ambo looked Ross over and asked him a series of questions. He gave Ross Pentrox (the green whistle), and suggested that we carry him down to the ambulance. This really wasn't an option as the terrain was far too loose and steep. Grizzly volunteered to reverse up the track to ferry Ross to the ambulance van which was on its way and would meet us out on the road. Griz backed his Patrol up to where we were and after folding down his split fold seat we opened the rear doors and the three of us lifted Ross and loaded him into the floor at the back (sorry about the blood Griz). Michael hobbled to the front passenger seat and I climbed in the back with Ross.

The trip out was driven as carefully as possible by Grizzly who took his time negotiating the rough track to keep our injured as comfortable as possible. I tried to support Ross's head as much as possible – and also to encourage him to take deep breaths through the Pentrox whistle. After what seemed like an eternity we emerged back out into civilisation where an ambulance and two paramedics awaited our arrival. Checking Ross over, he was given a morphine injection and Grizzly and I lifted Ross into a seated position. Ross was then able to stand while Griz and I supported him as he was transferred onto a gurney.

Michael also received some attention from one of the paramedics prior to him announcing that he wanted to drive his Landcruiser out himself. I needed to get my car, my phone and pack up my campsite before I could follow Ross to the Nambour hospital. Griz drove me back up to the bottom of the track where all the carnage had taken place. When we got there it was just in time to hear Suzi's distinct exhaust note idling down the steep incline. Molly told me that she had brought her some of the way and that Danny was now bringing her the rest of the way. With her down safely in Danny's capable hands, I got in and we then went in convoy back to the tarmac.

Once back at camp I had countless offers of help to pack up and to get to the hospital as quickly as possible. I then rang my wife and filled her in the news, which to her credit she took well. Within an hour I was at Ross's bedside at the Nambour Hospital emergency department. He had already had radiology scans and the nurse was tending to his needs.

After a bed transfer into a ward, the doctor confirmed that the radiology had revealed no obvious signs for concern. However he wasn't going anywhere, as standard protocols were that patients with suspected head injuries were kept in overnight for observation. After ringing my mother in law to provide an update, I left for home.

The next day Ross was transferred to the Sunshine Coast University Hospital. On the following Thursday (after watching the first State of Origin game from his hospital bed) Ross was discharged and was taken home.

On writing this article Ross has made a speedy recovery and is well and truly on the mend and back at work. He is however sporting some rather sinister scarring that will make for great campfire conversation. Ross was very apologetic for causing such unexpected disruption to the weekend, however as I tell him – it could have been much, much worse and possibly fatal.

In conclusion to this story, I would like to share the key message that I learnt from this induction (and I learnt a few things). It is the importance of being in a club with members who can work as a team and think quickly in an emergency situation. Secondly, it is having the right equipment and knowledge for the purposes of communicating and in administering first aid.

The times that I have been out with a mate in the middle of a state forest without comms, or without a first aid kit – and not even sure of where we were- and now knowing what can happen and seeing what our club members did for Ross, reinforces the need to travel with and learn from experienced 4wd'ers.

The next thing on my to do list – is a refresh on my first aid skills.
Thank you again to everyone involved in the rescue and in your thoughts and concern during Ross's recovery.

David Johnston

