

# Landcruiser Mountain Park

## 23 – 25 May

With the day off work, I had everything packed and ready to roll as soon as Tracie arrived home. With the dogs full of excitement we hit the road and made it all the way to the M3 before traffic brought us to a halt. All part of the joy of living in the big city.

Delayed only slightly, we continued north and west through Woodford then Kilcoy, before making our way up the range and hitting the dirt at Jimna. The road had only recently been graded and was in excellent condition, giving me an excuse to make up for lost time. Not that you need any more excuses when you drive a 60. Turning left into Landcruiser Park however put an end to the fun, as the road was just as rough as it usually is and likely contributed to the two broken leaves I found in the trailer springs a week or two later.

Paying our dues and heading down to the campsite, by the time we had set up our camp and sorted out the fur kids it was just on dusk. Chatting with the members who were already in attendance, we realized too late that nobody had done a firewood run yet. Thinking that disaster was imminent and there would be no bush television, we were saved by Carwyn who arrived with enough firewood for all. At least his lowered patrol on little tyres is still good for something. Around camp it was noticed that the Jeep Club were our neighbours for the weekend. This suited our resident Jeoper Pugsley just fine, and he set up his camp right in between the two clubs. It's a Jeep thing. They have a natural herd instinct.

More vehicles trickled in through the evening and we ended up with a good turnout. One notable exception was Gareth, our trip leader, who was unable to attend and chose to leave Grizzly in charge. Grizzly took to his appointment with glee, and led us in convoy to Saturday morning's first challenge – The western face of Telecom hill. Most of the convoy proceeded up this intimidating looking climb without trouble, although a few elected to take the bypass track. The trip back down the hill was highlighted by Disco Dave having an uncomfortable moment, but we all made it back to the road unscathed.

The next challenge presented was the infamous Camp Road. Grizzly led the charge once again, and making it look easy he arrived at the top with a flawless drive. The usual suspects all had a run, with Pugsley having some trouble when he slipped off line and got the front passenger tyre wedged in a rut. A bit of to-and-fro and he was out unscathed, or so we thought. Grizzly, thinking of how clean and easy his first run was, decided to line up for a second go. Unfortunately it all turned pear-shaped very quickly. Tracking off line the front drivers side tyre slipped down into the rut, sending the passenger side skyward up one bank and the drivers side taillight into the other.

Going forward meant going over, and going backwards was impossible without panel damage. Several options were considered, but eventually Andrew's Patrol was positioned at the top of the hill to winch Grizzly out of trouble. Nobody else seemed to want to have a go after this, so after completing only two tracks we had a break for lunch.

After being fed and watered we rumbled off in the direction of Troopy Trail. Not a tough track but always a fun drive up and over dusty hills and down through rocky gullies. From there we all went to have a look at Old Hilux Hill, although the original climb is so badly eroded now that nobody was keen to have a crack.

Claw Gorge was next on the agenda. This track is beginning to earn itself a reputation for recoveries and wet carpets, but undaunted, Grizzly again led the way. The first crossings passed without a hitch. Approximately knee-deep with a firm smooth base they posed no problems to our convoy. We then came to an obstacle with a few options. You could stay on the right hand bank, but you had to drive over a fairly large, tall rock. You could go left of the rock into the creek, but some very large rocks could be seen lurking under the surface. The third option was to cross the creek to a small rocky island in the middle, then drive through deep water around all obstacles and back to the right hand bank.

First in line, Grizzly chose to avoid the wet stuff and clamber over the big rock.

Successful though he was, the sound of steel on stone convinced me that this was not the path for everyone. Someone would have to walk the creek. Being the resident young fella, Calam was volunteered for the job. The deep water was declared passable, so being next in line it was up to me to try it out.

Turn hard left, across the narrow part of the creek, up onto the rocky island. Bang. Scrape. Crunch. Hopefully that wasn't anything important. (I found out later that it was one of the air tanks that took the brunt of that rock). Right hand down and through the water. Steer for the exit. Steer harder for the exit because the power steering belt is now wet and slipping. Out the other side. Easy as that. Andy – You're up. The mighty blue HiLux had a little less clearance than the others so far, so we carefully chose the best line possible. With a little blue paint left on the rocks the body protection did its job and Andy was through with a grin a mile wide. Having seen a few cars through, the rest of the group passed without incident.

We exited Claw Gorge without any wet carpet this time and pointed our bonnets up The Sure Track. Rocky, rough, and dusty we came to a very steep, loose hill with a decent size rock step ½ way up. Our fearless leader disappeared in a cloud of dust, reappearing a few seconds later lining up for a second attempt. Through the dust came the roar of all three litres being put to work, and when it settled Grizzly was at the top with a grin I could see from the bottom, knowing he had just won +1 for the Nissans. Deciding that discretion is the better part of valour, and cowardice the better part of discretion, I took the chicken track, having enough things to fix already.

John and Chugga were the only others brave enough to tackle this hill. John managed to get the front of his Landcruiser over the step, but being unable to proceed, he chose to winch out, rather than reverse down. Chugga had many red hot goes, fairly terrifying his passenger Jessica, but could not get the big black ute to climb the step. He reversed back down, and we went back to camp for happy hour, stopping for the all-important firewood on the way.

As we pulled into camp Pugsley reported a strange noise coming from the front of his Jeep. After some investigation the source turned out to be a broken front left uni joint – something that Jeeps use instead of CV's. Likely weakened during the incident at Camp Rd, it had just lasted the rest of the day before calling it quits. Pugsley and Anzac lobbed in in an attempt to make the Jeep driveable, however, Jeeps are not built like normal 4wd's, and in the fading light they were unable to work out how to get things apart. Anzac went back to his caravan to turn the lights on, but as soon as he plugged them in something shorted out and made a lot of smoke. Another casualty for the weekend.

Thankfully Sunday turned out to be a much more relaxing day. Pugsley got a few pointers from the Jeeps next door and quickly had the shorty ready to limp home. We also learned the Jeeps had some bad luck on Saturday – one had broken the same part as Pugs, while another had rolled on Tarago Trail. Apparently it had to be dragged 10 metres on its roof before they were able to recover it. Suddenly our troubles didn't seem so bad.

I jumped in with Andy for the Sunday run, and the plan was to go check out the north-eastern corner of the park that we rarely get to explore. We found some really good tracks up there – tight and windy through thick forest, with some steep, rocky climbs and descents thrown in to keep things interesting. Heading back toward camp for lunch we passed the playpen at Tarago Trail and just had to have a play. Down, through, up, and around – there are tracks, jump-ups, ruts and holes everywhere. The big boys picked one nasty, rutted jump-up to play on. Grizzly, of course, made it look easy. Matt was next and had a few attempts getting massive air under one front wheel, eventually climbing over the top. Chuga got over the top and then Anzac lined up for a go. With the big rut on this climb the 80 was diffing out and just getting nowhere. Anzac decided to try a line straddling the rut, keeping the passenger front wheel very high on the bank. It worked too – up and up he climbed, until with a horrible crunch he slipped back down into the rut and the side of the truck slammed into the bank, smashing the flare and denting the guard and door. Once back at camp Anzac had to break out the shovel to lever the door and guard apart so Janet could actually get out of the car and make his lunch.

The total for carnage at the end of the weekend was a wheel bearing, power steering tensioner bearing, a dinged air tank, and two broken trailer springs for me, Pugsley smashed a uni, Andy bent one of his steps, Anzac bent a stabilizer leg on the van, tried to set the van on fire, and bent the guard and door on the 80, Chugga tore one of his airbags, and Grizzly broke a taillight. Another great weekend at Landcruiser Park.

**Dylan**