

Overlander CC05 - Cameron's Corner Gathering

Author/Photos - Richard Windeyer

Richard (Richard) - Toyota Land Cruiser 100 Series 4.2Turbo Diesel - NSW

Andrew and Christie (AndrewW, Stoop) - Toyota Highlux Petrol - Vic

Kim and Sarah (Redman) - Nissan Patrol 4.2l Diesel - Vic

James and Rob (Ferrit) - Toyota Prado Diesel - ACT/SA

Will (WJD85) - Toyota SR5 - Qld

Jordan (Timber) - Toyota Land Cruiser 100 Series 4.2Turbo Diesel - Qld

Adrian (Doc Evil) - Nissan Patrol 4.2l Diesel - Vic

Barry (Sparra) - Toyota trayback - WA

Shane (Big Red) - Patrol trayback - Qld

Friday 24th June 2005



After packing the Cruiser the day before and with only 5000 clicks on the clock I got away about 7am as planned. Heading south along the Hume Highway I stopped to take a picture of a rainbow. It must have been a premonition.

Moving on with the cruise control set on 110kph and the GPS destination set as Narrandera I only stopped for rest breaks and food. A number of times I felt quite drowsy probably because the

vehicle is so comfortable and being automatic there is nothing to do and I did not have any passengers to talk to. The warning signs were there; blinking eyes, uncomfortable in the seat, so pulled over for a cup of tea on each occasion. It must be a lonely life being a truckie.

Just before Narrandera I came across The John Lake Centre which is an inland fisheries research station where the aquatic inhabitants of the inland river systems are studied in an attempt to reverse the decline of native fish. The small fee was paid and I viewed the video which was interesting and also looked at the aquarium display. There was not much other activity in the ponds as it was mid winter. Arriving in Narrandera I booked into a motel which would be the last taste of comfort for a while.

Saturday 25th June 2005

I was up early for the leg to Mildura to meet with Andrew, Christie, Kim and Sarah. Rain had recently fallen and it was good to see vegetation starting to green up and the property owners out ploughing their paddocks to get the winter crop in. The journey was uneventful and the power of the cruiser was appreciated in effortlessly overtaking a number of semis on some straight sections of road. I arrived early at the All Seasons caravan park where Andrew had previously booked us in. Camp was set up laying out the dome swag under a tarp attached to a tent pole, anchored to the roof bars, to keep off the dew. Waiting for the others to arrive I chatted to a fellow from WA who was in his late 40's. He had sold up his house purchased a nicely set up Patrol and caravan and was travelling around Australia. He said he and his partner stop at a different location for three months and find a job to keep themselves in petty cash. They were currently working in a local citrus orchard packing oranges.

The Victorian crew arrived after dark having left home late and set up camp under lights. We introduced ourselves and as it was getting late headed to the Gateway Tavern for dinner and a few drinks. The restaurant was quite crowded and we had to put our names down for a table. In the meantime a game of pool and a chat passed the time away. Just as we thought we had been forgotten we were called to our table. We discussed a plan of attack for the trip and agreed on Doc Evil's original plan whilst we enjoyed the very tasty food which was reasonably priced.

Sunday 26th June 2005

We broke camp early morning and prior to leaving Mildura checked out the lock and watched a paddle steamer on the Murray.

With Andrew leading we headed for Peterborough. Andrew and Kim had a fridge full of fruit and vegetables. Kim ate about six pieces of fruit and he and Andrew disposed of what was left just before the border where all our vehicles were searched. I didn't have any fresh fruit or vegetables as I crossed the SA border on a previous occasion and had to throw a fair bit away. Heading on for historic Morgan we stopped had a quick look around. This town on the Murray is a great place to stay, having done so before on a previous trip. The journey to Peterborough was uneventful and we arrived late afternoon and set up camp at the Peterborough Caravan Park.





When we booked in the owner advised us that there wasn't much fire wood and he said he would bring us a load later on. We noted that a number of other 4WD groups had already set camp. While we set camp Christie and Sarah built a fire in the communal fire place and got it going. Following dinner which we cooked individually we joined the other group round the fire and had a chat and a few drinks.

Monday 27th June 2005

Leaving Peterborough early morning we headed for Wilpena for two nights. On arrival, with threatening weather, we firstly looked at the resort accommodation which didn't suite. We then scouted around for a good camp site. Christie and Sarah extolled their talents by scoring one of the bus shelter bays for a small premium. It was \$6 for the two nights, which we thought was a bargain. We all set tents rather than swags around the bus shelter due to the likelihood of rain. Andrew and Kim went to the store to purchase firewood which was procured at a good discount. The girls volunteered to do a bit of washing whilst I supplied the pegs. Because of the damp conditions some of Kim's Shellite sparked the fire quickly and we all stood well back as he poured on a little more.



We also booked in for Skytreck, a self drive tour of a local property, the following day and Andrew checked out the web and put up a day trip for Wilpena on the forum.

Tuesday 28th June 2005



We left camp just after our neighbours for the Skytrek rendezvous at Willow Springs Station. The road was damp, which kept down the dust, and a little soft in places and the sky was overcast. The site office at Willow Station provided us with a map, directions and a few pointers. As we set off our neighbours arrived as they had stopped at the homestead for a bit of a gander. Following a stop at a bluff we moved on to the next marked location to look for some indigenous engravings. We walked

up down the rock face until we found what we were looking for. The trek however was not done justice because of the overcast sky however at Mt Caernarvon the wind was howling and it was bitterly cold but the vista was awesome really made the trip worthwhile.

Moving on we traversed some interesting country including a gully which reminded me of Stanley Chasm in the Simpson's Gap National Park. Back to camp a bit of a yarn around the fire and off to bed.

Wednesday 29th June 2005

We broke camp mid morning and headed for Leigh Creek via Brachina Gorge which was also worth a stop to look around. At Leigh Creek we called into the information centre and Kim booked accommodation in Coober Pedy in the Underground Experience Motel. Heading on north we stopped at Maree for some morning tea and a look around. One of the old Ghan diesels was on display near the station as well as the mail truck driven by E.G.(Tom) Kruse. The roads were now all dirt, in good condition and we now really felt we were in the outback.

Continuing on we turned left for the Oodnadatta Track and stopped on the edge of Lake Eyre to look at the salt encrusted surface.



Our next camp at Coward Springs was beckoning and we arrived late afternoon to find it fairly crowded. After some maneuvering found a suitable camp site and set up the camping gear. We had a look at the bore which was smaller than a spar and whilst the others went off for a few photos of the sunset I procured some timber from the ready supply of old sleepers available from the firewood pile and set a fire.

A hot shower is available and heated by an old steam boiler which has to be fired up each time it is used. The local caretaker kindly got it going and Sarah took the opportunity to have a shower. We ran into our neighbors from Peterborough and said hello. After cooking dinner we had a few drinks around the fire and retired for the night.

Thursday 30th June 2005

Thursday morning found us leaving mid morning and we stopped off at the Beresford Ruins. Sarah wanted a better view so climbed the water tower for a look around.

We continued on to William Creek and visited pub. An impressive hotel with hardly an inch spare on the roof or walls that didn't have business cards or other travellers belongings stuck to it. It must have been difficult for the reported 100 people who got stranded there later when the wet weather front came through.

We travelled on to Coober Pedy and arrived mid afternoon where I topped up my vehicle with diesel including the three 20 litre Jerries. We had a look around the information centre and then booked into the underground motel. No heaters or air conditioners were evident in the rooms which had been hewn out of the soft rock with tunnelling machines. They were much like a normal motel except for the walls which had no windows. The others commented they were a bit claustrophobic but I thought they were fine.



In the afternoon we headed off for a tour of Tom's Opal Mine and on the way booked a table for dinner at the Underground Café. On arriving at the mine we were a little surprised to find our guide was an elderly lady, not Tom as we expected. She took us on tour of the mine explaining how the opal was located, extracted and then cut and polished. In the mine she gave us a pair of divining rods and explained they were used to locate the pockets of opal in the seams. We were a bit sceptical so she gave us a go.

I tried first and it didn't work. I tried again and lo and behold it seemed to work with the rods crossing over where the opal was located. The others had a go and it also seemed to work for them. Our guide also showed us how the blower worked.

After the tour of the mine there was an area we could noodle for opals. Kim started on the big pile of scree and couldn't find anything whilst our tour guide led us to a box of material that had already been screened. After Christie and Sarah found some rocks with good showings of opal we finally dragged them away and headed back to the motel to clean up for dinner. Dinner was very nice and we headed back to the Motel where Andrew set up his computer to get onto the web and see what was happening on the forum. We then retired for the night.

Friday 1st July 2005

Kim and Sarah visited the Laundromat to do some washing whilst Christie and I went to the supermarket for supplies. I also went to the drive in bottle shop to top up my supply of Vin Cardboard for the Simpson crossing. The range consisted of around 10 varieties of 4litre casks although there was a good range of bottles, however they don't travel well. We visited the public water supply where Andrew and Kim topped up their supplies at 20c for 30 litres. If only fuel was this cheap. They then visited the servo to top up their fuel and reserves. We finally got away late morning with me leading for a small detour to the Breakaways. Early morning is best to view these geological formations however you have to put up with the tourist buses. There was only one other vehicle at the time we travelled through.

The road to Oodnadatta posed no problems and we arrived early afternoon. After topping up the fuel and having a bite to eat we moved on expecting to be at Dalhousie late afternoon. The road was fine until the Pedirka ruins turnoff. From then on we had everything thrown at us apart from rock hopping. It was a slow and torturous journey which saw us at the Dalhousie Ruins at sunset. A couple of people who had come out to the ruins for the



sunset advised us there were about 70 vehicles at the springs. We took a few photos and resumed our journey to the springs arriving after dark.

There were vehicles everywhere and we initially set up camp well away from the main camping area. Kim and Andrew did a recky and found a better site occupied by a fellow that had just done the Canning Stock Route. We manoeuvred into position and reset our camp site, taking advantage of the fire that was already going, but adding some timber we had left over from Wilpena. Dinner was cooked there were some yarns and drinks around the fire and it was off to bed.

Saturday 2nd July 2005



Saturday was a lay day as we had agreed to meet Ferrit and his dad Rob for the Simpson Crossing. Mid morning found only around 15 vehicles at the spring as most had resumed their journey from Mount Dare to Oodnadatta whilst a small number had headed for the Simpson. We took the opportunity to spread ourselves out a bit more. The spring beckoned and I was first in and even on a cold morning the 38degree Celsius water temperature was very relaxing.

After about 30 minutes extra wrinkles were starting to show so I headed back to camp. On the way met Christie and Sarah who were headed off for a dip. Andrew and Kim decided to head to Mount Dare to top up fuel and have a look around whilst I remained in camp. They returned late morning and we all adjourned to the springs for some more relaxation. Two couples who had flown in ate a boxed lunch overlooking the spring. Lounging around in the afternoon saw Ferrit arrive and he and Rob set up camp and everyone then adjourned to the springs again.

Late afternoon saw two choppers arrive on the other side of the spring for a photo shoot. It is a busy place in winter and the ranger had gone on two weeks leave.

Sunday 3rd July 2005

We got away mid morning headed along the French Line for Purnie Bore. I had assembled my premium cost sand flag at Dalhousie whilst Andrew and Kim shared a squid pole. Ferrit used a fishing rod.

We aired down our tyres even though the sand was reasonably firm and moved on. Now on the Simpson proper with some 1000 sand hills ahead of us we met a number of groups along the way. With UHF channel 10 being monitored we were well aware of their presence before sighting them. Some people it seems were not using this channel including a vehicle travelling ahead of us. Crossing the first 300 sand dunes found us at our first camp site along the Rig Road.



Camp was set whilst the Victorians had a shower. This consisted of Kim setting up his shower and a tarp being spread on the ground whilst they sprayed each other in their swimmers. We had dinner and a few yarns and retired for the night.

Monday 4th July 2005

The following morning we headed for the lone gum tree where we had morning tea.



We then travelled up the Erabena track and turned right onto the WAA line. The tracks has been fairly smooth and hard and only a little soft on top till now but once on the WAA the track deteriorated with steeper and softer sand dunes and many with bypass tracks around for those vehicles having trouble. With our tyres aired down we did not have any trouble. Some of the main track dune crossings had been destroyed by erosion so the bypass

track had to be taken. On a hard straight section running along a gully between two dunes a couple of wild camels raced along beside us until they disappeared over a dune.

We came across a vehicle towing an old trailer and two dirt bikes parked off the road and wondered if the trailer would make it through.

A little later we came to the first of a number of salt encrusted player lakes and followed the main wheel tracks noting that some people had tried out their mud running skills off to the side. The surface was fairly solid and we didn't have any problems. We turned left up Knolls Track then right back onto the French Line where we stopped late afternoon at a designated camp site and set up camp near a number of wattles. They had a pungent but familiar odour so Rob got out his plant book and identified them as *Arcacia Georgina* and let us know that the extract was used to make 1080 poison. We weren't too comfortable with these trees in the proximity of camp however concluded if the fumes were toxic it would not be a designated camp site.

Andrew and I topped up our fuel whilst Kim and Ferrit had enough to get through to Birdsville. We had dinner and sat around the camp fire where Ferrit and then I amused the group with some demonstrations using light and sound.

Tuesday 5th July 2005

The next morning we headed for Poepell's Corner arriving around morning tea time. The site has had a lot of work done on it in the last 12 months and it's good to see our Desert Parks fees being put to good use. We were not long there when another group arrived. I had a chat to one of the group known as PG on the forum and he advised they had come down the Hay River from Jervois on the Plenty Highway and were trying to contact the LCOOL group who were also in the area. A couple of PG's group were towing trailers and although we had seen two old trailers wrecked on the side of the road they had not had any problems.





We moved on stopping for lunch and then headed towards Big Red. Travelling through an area that had previously had quite a bit of water over it the track was extremely wheel rutted and we had to go very slowly. We thought Big Red was in site a couple of times however these were all false alarms until there was no mistaking it in the distance with three tracks running up it. On arrival Andrew and Kim let more air out of their tyres

whilst I left mine at 25psi cold. I tried first up using the diagonal track however the tyres had heated up to 30psi and I just missed getting over. Andrew, Kim and Ferrit did not have any problems. I let my tyres down to 20psi and got over easily. Kim and Andrew then tried the straight over section and after having to let tyres down again got over. I got over OK without letting down my tyres down any more. A Jackeroo had about 20 goes at this track and finally made it after a huge run-up.

We left for Birdsville after sunset travelling with a fair distance between each vehicle and the spots on to pick out any roos or cattle. The east side of the Simpson had seen a fair bit of rain and there was water across and beside the track which made for an interesting trip in the dark. We arrived at the Birdsville Caravan Park and booked in. According to the owner I was a bit on the nose after the Simpson crossing and quickly set up my swag and headed for a shower while the others set up tents.

We had dinner and a few drinks at the pub which was a welcome change from our own cooking. The LCOOL group had arrived before us and were in the bar enjoying themselves. After dinner I adjourned to the bar and had a chat to a couple of guys who had also come across the Simpson that day. One was well and truly under the weather and went to have a chat to the one of the boys in blue who was in the bar drinking Coke. He did not seem to be amused. On my return to camp I sat chatting to Ferret and Rob until at 10.30pm we were told to keep quite by another camper. This turned out to be Willem from Explore OZ and we made our peace the following day.

Wednesday 6th July 2005

We decided on another lay day at Birdsville planning to be at Cameron's Corner late Friday. We had a relaxing day and I set some Yabby traps not knowing the R month rule until later. As you would expect the traps were empty. Washing was done and the group had a look around Birdsville. Ruth who runs the caravan park let us know that rain was expected. I returned to camp whilst the others went to the museum for a look around. We had an early tea with and I took up Robs offer for some of their home made curry. I then headed off to the pub for the State of Origin which didn't mean much to the others. I was up the front with a very vocal local NSW supporter dressed in team colours and got into the spirit of things. A little later as NSW took the lead some more locals showed their true colours by painting their faces blue.

Thursday 7th July 2005

We got away early for the journey to Innamincka via Cordillo Downs as Walkers Crossing was closed. After having a look around the shearing shed we stopped nearby for lunch.

I lost the top of my aerial somewhere along this road and Ferrit lost his spare tyre from the roof. We arrived in Innamincka and ran into Will and Timber. After topping up fuel and supplies we all headed to Cullyamurra Waterhole. It was bitterly cold and overcast as we set up camp and I put up my tent as rain was expected. During the night a foul wind started up and the camp had to be battened down with the tarps being taken down as it was too windy. It then started to rain lightly at first and then it started bucketing down.

Friday 8th July 2005

We awoke in the morning to muddy and greasy conditions and packed up during a lull in the rain. We left the waterhole and headed for the Bore Track which we decided was a more direct route. After some sliding around we arrived at the turnoff passing another vehicle heading into Innamincka. We noted another vehicle had already been down the Bore track that morning and followed the tracks. It must have been a local as the tracks took us around the water and bog holes.

We let down our tyres to prevent damage to the track and after a very slow 8 hours to do the 200km arrived at Bollards Lagoon. The caretaker was surprised to see us but readily took our \$10 per vehicle for the use of the track. We arrived at Cameron's Corner late afternoon and paid for our campsites. Karen behind the bar was surprised to see us as the roads had been closed that morning. We explained we had come down the Bore Track from Cullyamurra Waterhole and hadn't passed any road closed signs and those at the waterhole showed open. She advised she had received a number of messages advising that various people were holed up in different locations around Cameron's Corner and some people could not make it.



Camp fees are donated to the RFDS and the fees are paid by way of a \$5 or \$10 note. This is wrapped around a protruding drawing pin using a 20c coin as the weight. The missile is then projected into the ceiling where the note unravels and drops the coin, leaving the note stuck to the ceiling.

We set camp in the dark and adjourned to the store for dinner and a few drinks. We came across Sparra who had been there a day or so after taking three weeks to get there. Got to admire his dedication. Doc Evil had also arrived earlier having beaten the road closures.

Saturday 9th July 2005



It dawned fine and cold with a strong wind which we hoped might dry out the track and allow the others to get in. Bill the proprietor was out sweeping the greens on the three hole golf course for the Interstate Challenge to be held that afternoon. Following lunch we played a round and with a few Gimme's, Mulligan's and other non golf ball placements and no one having kept score it was a draw.

Following golf we adjourned to the bar and the hair dressing salon for haircuts and makeup by the locals with the proceeds going to the RFDS. Most of us had either a haircut or makeup with a few surprises as to who had what.

The guys who had make up including Bill put on a floor show later that night which was an absolute riot and made up for the disappointment of the gathering. As it was so cold rum and bourbon was the order of the day. Some of us retired around midnight while the others kicked on into the wee small hours.

Sunday 10th July 2005

With the wind blowing the track was drying out fast however the morning road report only showed NSW as being open. Chris phoned up and advised he was at Innamincka and would leave from there for his Simpson crossing. I decided that as there was no roads open for the other states and the roads still wet and muddy and another front expected I would leave with the Vic guys for Tibooburra and Broken Hill. We said goodbye to the guys from Qld and WA and headed off. The track between Cameron's corner and Tibooburra gave us some excitement and recovery practice with one 400metre section of track completely covered with water.



We arrived in Tibooburra had some lunch and after being warned of an over zealous policeman cleaned our number plates and lights. The Silver City Highway to Broken Hill was very chopped up on the dirt sections although the main tracks were OK required concentration to stay in them. A couple of sedans were also out and about. Doc had booked us into his mate's hotel in Broken Hill and we arrived around 8.30pm after avoiding many small roos. There were some close calls and Kim scored a rabbit. The hotel being the oldest in Broken Hill turned out to have older style accommodation and was in the process of being restored to its former glory although still had a long way to go. We had dinner at the hotel and retired for the night.

Monday 11th July 2005



Following breakfast I took delivery of the snatch strap I had had won on the auction from Doc Evil and the Vic guys and Ferrit after visiting the local ARB for spares headed on their separate ways. I stayed at Broken Hill for an extra day to have a look around including a side trip to Silverton. After buying a new air filter from Toyota he set off for Silverton calling in at a mine on the way. The entrance fee was exorbitant so

continued on to Silverton.

This was worth a visit to have a look at the artist studios and the museum which was excellent.

Tuesday 12th July 2005

I left for Cobar early under a cloudy sky and the rain set in about half way between Broken Hill and Cobar. The rain washed some of the mud off the vehicle however there was still enough to get some strange looks from people in their clean cars on the blacktop. I travelled straight through Wilcannia without stopping and arrived in Cobar mid afternoon. I looked around the open cut mines however there was not much to see.

Wednesday 13th July 2005

Again leaving early, with the rain continuing and an uneventful leg arrived back in Sydney late afternoon.

An excellent trip with a bit of everything for everyone. Thanks to those who could make it for their camaraderie and friendship.
Commiserations to those who couldn't get there.