

Caves to Caves via Dingo Dell 20/21 April 2013

Primary author and photos Richard Windeyer

In 2008 a number of 4WD clubs including Triple Diamond had agreed to participate in helping the Landrover Owners Club (LROC) with the regeneration of some tracks and construction of a pit toilet on private property at Dingo Dell. Dingo Dell is a small valley located near the Kowmung River on the Kowmung River Trail. This track is part of the iconic Cave to Caves route between Wombeyan and Jenolan Caves.

In return for the regeneration work the club has permission to camp on the property and with this in mind two Triple Diamond members arranged to lead a trip starting at Mittagong in the Southern Highlands of NSW and finishing near Jenolan Caves camping overnight on the property at Dingo Dell. One member would lead a day trip returning to Sydney Saturday night while the other would lead the group of overnight campers.

Meeting in the car park in Mittagong it was an early start at 8.30am on a wet, windy, cold and miserable Saturday morning. The owners of some 30 vehicles had indicated their intention to attend this outing with 28 finally participating and 19 camping overnight making it arguably the clubs largest ever trip.

The convoy was split into four groups so as not to cause too much disruption to the local village population. The groups departed about 5 minutes apart and it was an easy jaunt on bitumen to the start of the dirt road where we all aired down our tyres.



We soon arrived at the road tunnel which was cut in 1899 as part of a new tourist road linking the Southern Highlands to Wombeyan Caves and continued on down the road which had recently been graded so it was in pretty good condition. Luckily the quarry half way

down the hill was not operating so there was no unexpected confrontation with B Doubles coming from the opposite direction.

Continuing to wind our way down the road we passed River Island and Toyota Landcruiser Club properties on the Wollondilly River before arriving at Goodman's Ford adjacent to Wollondilly River Station, another property on which you can camp for a fee. Even after the rain the river had not risen much. On the trip down one of our group indicated that the engine in his vehicle was starving for fuel so he stopped to investigate with no obvious causes.

A little later we arrived at Wombeyan Caves where the four groups stopped for morning tea, a briefing and a rearrangement of vehicles into two groups. The fuel filter for the problem vehicle was inspected and found to be clogged, so it was cleaned and after some persuasion the engine started to run properly.



Leaving Wombeyan Caves we headed for Mt Werrong for lunch via Range, Mt Fatigue Fire Trail and Mt Werrong Road. Mt Werrong is a lovely picnic/camping spot with a clean hut and long drop amenities adjacent to the Bicentennial National Trail. Everyone enjoyed a picnic lunch they had

prepared, some more sumptuous than others.

Following lunch we travelled past Gurnang State forest which had recently been clear felled leaving a great scar on the landscape. The Kowmung River Fire Trail took us down some steep and slippery descents to our campsite at Dingo Dell. Arriving mid afternoon with plenty of light we set up camp. It was still drizzling so everyone made hast to set up camp quickly.



The property had regenerated very well with the tussock grass we had previously transplanted thriving although some of the small saplings had not survived. The condition of the pit toilet was quite satisfactory but it was noted that the water tower which once stood behind the toilet shed has fallen over. By assumption, we believe that wombat activity has undermined the tower causing it to collapse. There was no immediate rectification possible.



Everyone had been asked to bring a bag of wood with them. This was a good move as although there was some firewood on site from previous trips it was sodden. He started a fire with some dry kindling and it wasn't long before a cosy fire was flaming away.

The early leavers had an early dinner and we bid them farewell as they headed back to Sydney.

The rest of us enjoyed happy hour and partook of shared delicacies around the fire and partaking in some refreshments before preparing our own dinner. The rain eased and we again adjourned to the fire where tall tales and *true* were espoused about past trips.

Sometime in the evening one of our number found a patch of blood soaking through his jeans, just above his right knee, so without hesitation, he immediately accessed the site – the easiest way possible, to find a leech had been busily dining away, but it further fell into his jeans which were around his ankles. After a few minutes of searching, it was all safe to redress as his jeans had been given the all clear!

Of course no Triple Diamond campfire is complete without the celebratory Jameson Irish Whisky as our unofficial club drink to warm the spirits on a cool evening! Some of the newer members were introduced to the recipe, while others reminisced on many of the other occasions that we have also shared this drink.



The morning dawned dry so following a leisurely breakfast we broke camp. The plan was to cross the Kowmung River and then head to Kanagra Walls prior to heading back to Sydney. Prior to the group heading off two of us returned back up the Kowmung River Trail and then down the Banshea Fire Trail to the locked gate on the south side of the property on which we camped where there is a great view of a magnificent waterfall which after the rain was cascading in sheets of glistening water. We headed back to camp to depart with the others.

Crossing the Kowmung River the crossing was in good condition and the water at its normal half wheel height level we proceeded via some more bush tracks with a number of more challenging creek crossings to Kanangra Walls for lunch.





As it was the school holidays the car park was fairly crowded however we all managed to fit in and enjoyed a leisurely lunch. Following lunch we headed for the lookout to view the magnificent Kanangra Walls and were not disappointed. On this crisp sunny day the view was

splendid.

A number of us bid adieu and headed for home airing our tyres up at the intersection of Kanangra Road and Edith Road before heading for home.

The trip leader led a bushwalk of those remaining from Kanangra Walls, it was a very scenic walk down to a very picturesque waterfall and water hole down some sometimes very steep stairs. The serenity of this location was really worth the walk and the steep climb back to the cars.

On returning to the vehicles, the trip leaders group formed up and headed off (now seven vehicles) and also aired up at the same intersection before heading down to Jenolan caves where they drove through the "Grand Arch" which was a fantastic way to finish off a great weekend with a great group of people.

It was a most enjoyable trip in spite of the inclement weather and well lead by out two trip leaders.