

Stockton and West Wallsend - 8/9 March 2008
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Following a successful combined trip between the Triple Diamond and Overlander 4WD clubs in March 2007 it was agreed to rerun this trip.

Andrew (Rallypaj) headed up late Friday afternoon and set camp in one of our usual haunts just in from the Lavis Lane entrance amongst the sand dunes just as the crash of thunder and brilliant bolts of lightening erupted from a huge electrical storm rolling in from Stockton Bight. He hurriedly erected his tent and tried to settle down to sleep, as the storm continued to howl outside. Even with a folded towel across his eyes and ears to blot out some of the commotion it was not enough to get a good night's sleep.

Saturday morning luckily dawned a glorious fine day and Richard rolled into the Lavis Lane servo in the Landcruiser 100 Series to await the arrival of Craig (Gonzo) in his 1962 Unimog. Craig imported this vehicle from the Swiss Army and was keen to try it out on the sand.



Richard was able to raise Andrew on the radio and we arranged to meet on the first sand dune near the entrance to the beach. Heading onto the sand we all had a play on the dune. Craig in the Mog was battling to keep moving on the sand and so aired down some more. This made a big difference.



Our next destination was the beach and a quiet run down to the Sygna wreck for a bite of morning tea and the obligatory vehicle line up. The sand was fairly firm after the rain and there was a lot of water about which had collected in small depressions forming large pools and lakes between the dunes.

Leaving the wreck it was a quick run to "The Bowl" where we came across another 4WD club, consisting mainly of Range Rovers, and watched as a number of them had great difficulty driving out on their low profile

tyres. Andrew drove his Pajero down into the bowl and showed them how it was done.

Driving in Richard got stuck manoeuvring out the first time. Engaging his new lockers he drove the Cruiser out easily the second time. While in "The Bowl" Andrew snatched one of the stranded Range Rovers free, and also a shopping trolley that was buried on its side in the sand wall. Craig and he loaded it onto the roofrack to be returned to its normal habitat in a supermarket car park.





Heading north along the back of dunes we arrived at a fenced off area where a new sand mining lease was being excavated. Driving along a bulldozed track just outside the perimeter fence a Rodeo tried to follow the Mog and became stuck fast. Andrew was again able to assist and sent another happy customer on his way.

During lunch Richard paddled around in the shallows of a pond trying to photograph some frogs however didn't have any luck – they were well hidden. Craig needed to get back to Sydney so we

bid him farewell and continued north over the towering dunes at the back of the beach encountering some very soft sand where we both got stuck a couple of times. Although we were able to extract ourselves without any help from the other. As the sand was becoming softer and the sides of dune much steeper we headed down to the firmer sand closer to the beach and on up to Anna Bay. Exiting the beach we headed for the lookout on the point however Richard's front locker refused to disengage. But with a bit of persistence and persuasion the locker finally released.

Heading back down the beach and towards our planned campsite we met Glenn Torrens in the Pathfinder and his mate Tony in a BMW X3. Leaving them to play in the sand we scouted for a suitable spot to camp. We were also joined by Tim (Piston) who had a load of tree off-cuts for the fire on the roof of his newly acquired Landcruiser 80 Series. This together with Andrew's and Richard's bags of fire wood would ensure a roaring camp fire that evening.

Setting up camp on the edge of one of the pools of water amongst the paperbark trees we expected an onslaught of mossies on dusk. A cacophony of frog's croaking soon indicated the mossies might not eventuate and this proved to be the case. Dinner was a leisurely affair and few refreshments around the camp fire ensured we were well primed to endure the frogs during the night.



Sunday dawned another beautiful day and whilst the others packed Tim and Richard headed off for a quick circumnavigation of the south end of Stockton. They watched as a fisherman reeled in a 2m reef shark and then from the top of the bowl as two horsemen took an unhurried gallop below. With the others ready to leave they headed off, airing up at Lavis Lane and we were on our way to West Wallsend, leaving Tony to make his own way home.



We picked up Matt (Editor) just before the town of West Wallsend, and Pete (Hoyks) joined us just before the powerline track. We followed this pot-holed and rutted ground for some way over some steep hills giving our vehicles a good workout. All was going well until Andrew's Pajero slipped off a gutter into a bit of a precarious position. But with some assistance from Tim all was soon good and Andrew was back on his way. A little experience goes a long way at times like that.

Heading down into a gully the track became very slippery and we had to exercise some caution on the mud before finally arriving at a creek crossing. This harmless looking creek proved to be a substantial obstacle as it was very soft and boggy. Richard had a drama or two getting across, which involved some winching, and Andrew subsequently snatching him back across. Again our experience was tested and it was easy to see why driving in a Club environment, with a bunch of people who really know what they're doing, can go a very long way towards making seemingly major problems easily fade away.

We decided that getting eight vehicles across would take way too long, so we headed back the way we came. Richard's Cruiser had developed a couple of issues as a result of his creek adventure so after some quick repairs carried out by Matt and Glenn we headed for the blacktop.



Passing the biggest and deepest puddle in the area, one of our number gave himself a very damp excursion by mistakenly driving straight into it! Tim was quickly on hand and easily snatched the swamped Pathy out. Taking the quickest way out to the main road we called it a day and went our separate ways.

Another weekend with plenty of adventure making for an excellent trip with a great bunch of people. The Overlander 4WD Club will be making trips to McIntyre's Hut and the Bendethera Valley in NSW in the future, with more adventures in the planning stages.