

Training Weekend – Peake (9th – 10th August 2014)

LEADER & TRAINER: PETER HARPER: ASSESSOR: BARRY ANDERSON

Participants: Peter and Sandra Harper
Barry & Jenny Anderson, Overland Club
Stephen, Dean & Cameron Kelly
John & Annemaree Tichborne
Norma and Bronte Rivett

Well, what an absolutely great weekend that turned out to be, full of training, assessing and fun.

Norma, Bronte, Barry, Jenny, John & Annemaree all travelled to Peake on Friday evening and set up camp and Pete, Sandra, Stephen, Dean & Cameron all arrived on Saturday morning around 9 am at camp (Pete, Sandra & Stephen, Dean & Cameron all met up by accident at the Shell cafe in Taillem Bend for a coffee on Saturday morning and drove the rest of the way together.)

Once at camp we were welcomed by everyone else and quickly set up camp so that we could get on to do some training and assessing which was the reason why we were there, as well as to enjoy some camaraderie around the campfire at night!

By approx 10.30am we were split into two groups. John & Annemaree wanted to be assessed in snatch strap procedures so were accompanied by Barry, the assessor, and headed out to the side slope side of the dunes. The rest of us, led by Pete, headed to the other side of the dunes for some training and fun.

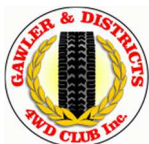
Once out on the sand it was evident to all participants that whoever had been up there previously, had well and truly churned the place up with big wheels as deep ruts & evidence of "donuts" was everywhere with not a spot of "virgin" sand to be had!!! This made traversing the tracks quite a hairy experience and especially on the hills which showed evidence of deep ruts and deep holes which would test the mettle of not only the trainees but the trainer as well.

Pete fearlessly led the way in his Toyota Prado but on a few slopes was unable to make it to the top in one go or sometimes not at all given the state of the track. He was aptly followed by Jennie in her Mazda B50 4WD Ute, Stephen & co in their Mitsubishi Pajero and Norma and Bronte in their modified Nissan Patrol vehicle. Full marks must go to Norma and Bronte in their vehicle for attempting the tracks in 2WD!!!!

After failing to get up the first one after several attempts, Norma checked to see if the hubs were in only to find that they had been previously but when Bronte thought he was putting them in, he actually put the vehicle back in 2WD. His excuse? He didn't have his specs on!! Really, Bronte!!! It caused quite a laugh but once rectified, the vehicle sailed up most of the slopes with ease as they both expected it to do. It'll take a while to live that one down!

After attempting most of the hills, we were at Hill 7 when we heard Barry on the radio asking for assistance as John & Annemaree's vehicle was well and truly stuck in the sand after taking a wrong path. Off we went, the cavalry to the rescue.

What ensued was a full snatch strap recovery of the Patrol with John being assessed by Barry at the same time and Annemaree in full control of the Patrol. The first snatch attempt



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by Pete's Prado moved the Patrol but not sufficiently enough to free it. So, everything was set up for a second attempt from a slightly different angle this time.

Once the snatch was "live" everyone waited with bated breath to see if this would be the successful "snatch." The drivers of the vehicles were given their orders, let the snatch begin! There was a most sickeningly horrendous sound as the strap tightened and the Prado went sideways the full width of the vehicle as the snatch took place but it did successfully pull the Patrol free.

Once the vehicles had been disconnected we all came out of the dunes expecting to see damage to the Prado, but no, the awful sound we all heard was the chain jumping from one side of the strap to the other as the strap became taut. Phew! Thank goodness for that. All I could see were dollar signs as I envisaged an expensive repair job coming up!!

After all this excitement, in which John was successfully assessed, it was back to camp for lunch.

In the afternoon, Barry took John & Annmaree out again but to the other side of the dunes this time, and we all headed over to the side slopes for some practice. The idea was to see how slowly each vehicle could be driven to successfully cross this very chewed up area without having to resort to great speed to do so.

The ruts in the sand were huge and it was quite a feat to successfully traverse the slope in a slow manner but every vehicle did so congratulations to all drivers. Once we had had enough of playing there, it was back to the hilly bits again. Some hills were successful, others not as the deep ruts caused some real problems.

Jenny, who is learning, did a great job and was successful in everything she attempted.....except for the last hill where she got stuck right at the top with two wheels over the crest but she had bottomed out. Pete attempted to pull the vehicle free from the front but couldn't budge it as most of the vehicle was down the back of the slope. All we were doing was digging ourselves in. Mmmm time for a re-think.

An attempt was made to contact John & Barry in the Patrol but, unbeknown to us, they were back at camp and out of the vehicle, so didn't hear the call. Okay, Prado to the rescue once more. Around the back of the dune we went so that Pete could back the vehicle up the slope towards the B50 and pull Jenny out backwards. Success at last!! By this time, it was time for "happy hour" so we headed back to camp.

When we got back, there was a terrific camp fire going thanks to Bronte so we gathered our chairs, drinks and nibbles and talked through the day's events. The weather was surprisingly mild, much warmer than Gawler/Freeling had been and the previous evening was the same according to Bronte & Norma. Meals were cooked and consumed then we settled down around the fire for the evening.

Most of us had brought extra clothing expecting to be rugged up around the fire at night but that wasn't the case - all we needed was a fleece, preferably with a hood, no hats or gloves were necessary at all. Wonderful.

We all chatted by the bright light of an almost full moon and the glow of the fire until one by one we left and headed for bed. I was amazed that I didn't need the thermals I had brought with me to wear to bed - just a pair of jammies and a couple of quilts sufficed - didn't even need the blanket! Beauty.



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Sunday we were due for a 9am start so after the delicious smells of bacon and eggs cooking and breakfasts consumed, some folk started the packing up process while others decided to watch a winch recovery performed by Pete as part of his training/assessment for the Advanced part of the training. This took most of the morning and was visible from the campsite.

A very lazy wind had sprung up making the morning quite cold. Clouds came and went with a sprinkling of rain occasionally. Once the training was complete, everyone returned to camp to have a spot of lunch before heading home.

We were in the process of packing up when the heavens opened and the tent got wet. Bummer! What a nuisance. We decided to join most people in the shed to eat lunch and chat hoping the nasty cold wind would dry out the tent. It did a reasonable job but there were still areas that would need drying out later.

Goodbyes were said as one by one we headed home. What a great weekend, mission accomplished. Not only was the training and assessing good but there was a lot of fun & camaraderie too.

I am sure that the next Peake trip will be equally successful and I know I'll be putting my name down again and I encourage others to do likewise if only for the social aspect it provides.

[Sandra & Pete Harper]