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## *Peake September 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2007*

It was announced at a club meeting that another 4WD club were unable to meet their Peake Weekend booking – was the Overland Club interested in filling in the booking? I knew I would be interested (and the children too) but could not give a commitment on that night. I also thought of a mate at work (Andrew) who might be interested given his first trip during the June Peake training weekend left him wanting more. I contacted the trip officer on the following Monday to discover too late – rats! A few days later there was an email to say it was back on



again as a social trip with about six cars or so. Told Andrew and he was good to go too so locked into the calendar. Thought my Dad and of a couple of other friends who might be interested, so checked out that was a possibility. Dad was interested; more so in catching up with the family, as he does not have a 4WD. My friends were also interested but as the day drew nearer only one could make it and he does not own a 4WD – more passengers for the Jackaroo. The final tally would take up all seven seats with me (Coen), the three children (Amie, Natasha, & Mark), my father (John) and my friend (also John) with one of his sons (James); my wife could not make it due to a double booking.

After the Morgan training weekend of September 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, Martin had given a tip on how to make a sand flag base when there is no bull-bar. Was keen to give it a try so rigged it up ready to try it out at Peake. So all equipped, Friday night saw the camper-trailer made ready, the recovery gear packed, food packed, clothing and bedding packed, children packed and we were ready for an early start on the Saturday. Had earlier in the week spoken to my Father, my friend John and Andrew all of whom indicated they would meet at Tailem Bend by 8:45am. They also indicated that it was only to be a day trip for each of them. When I had suggested to the children a day trip there was a howl of protest “No Dad, we want to camp!” – guess the long-drops and cold night does not bother them too much after all.

Andrew was only going to do a day trip to ease the first introduction to the 4WD sand driving experience for Sue and children. He was not sure how they would go and adding the camping concept may have been a bit too much for the time being? The June training weekend was Andrew’s first experience of sand driving, whilst there were some tricky situations and some of the plastic shielding being broken off the Suzuki he was nevertheless keen to have another go.

The alarm sounds, in general not a pleasant sound or thought, but this time tempered by the fact that soon we would be 4WD driving. We were on the road by 6:40am on the way to Tailem Bend via Kersbrook, Birdwood, Palmer, Murray Bridge joining the highway. Arrived at Tailem Bend at 8:20am to top-up the fuel and join the throng behind the Shell Service Station. We were the last club member to arrive so in the time honoured tradition we got the privilege of writing the trip report. Andrew arrived shortly after, my Father was already there



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and John joined us by 8:45am. There was another to come but by 9am they had not shown so we were on our way.

Mark took the lead in his white Pajero followed by a green Pajero driven by Chris. Chris had three friends along. Then came the Suzuki of Andrew, the two non 4WDs of John and my Father, the Jackaroo and the caboose was Grant in his Patrolasaurus. That meant five 4WDs for the day and four staying overnight. Arrived at Peake to find a few more gates closed than usual and the wind blowing quite strongly, something that did not change during the time we were there, barely letting up. After setting up camp it was time to let the tyres down and play in the sand.

While I called out to the children who had disappeared up into the dune, to pile into the Jackaroo, Grant called out to John to see if he wanted to ride passenger with him – sure calls John. Appreciate it Grant and John sends his thanks. John had, as far as I know, not experienced sand dune driving either as a passenger or as a driver. Grant charged up the dune to the South-West of the campsite clearing the crest and heading down the other side looping around back to the campsite. By then the children were back to the car and ready to head out. A quick check to find out how John went to discover that he found out about the concept of the front safety/grip bar but thought it was great. The Patrol, the Jackaroo and the Suzuki headed out to the side-slope to commence the day's fun. The Pajero's joined us not much later. The fierce wind ended up ruining any chance of the sand-flag arrangement I had made so off it came before any damage was done. Some ideas on how to improve the arrangement are now in progress.

Mark decided to have a look at one of the tracks that enters "Death Valley" to end-up perched on the top in soft sand unable to go one way or the other it was to set some of the tone for the rest of the day. Grant headed on up and a snatch-strap was rolled out to be used as a gentle tow-rope to get Mark off the top. As it was the first of the day, most piled out of the cars to trudge up the dune in-between the scrub plants to various safe viewing vantage points. A gentle-tug and Mark was out during which time Grant decides to have a crack at it. He too ends up perched on top so Mark repays the recovery. The rest of the morning is playing in and around the dunes of this section. A gentle introduction to those who have never experienced sand driving with some small dunes, short narrow tracks and short steep descents to give a feel for the conditions. There was one track that the Jackaroo could not quite make it up due to its softness and its full load of passengers, a reverse down the slope to give the Suzuki a chance to follow the earlier successful Pajeros. The Suzuki too had trouble and decided to reverse out. We headed back to the campsite for lunch at 12pm.

We were itching to head back out, especially those who were only able to do a day trip, so headed off around 1pm. While waiting for the others, Andrew and I headed off up the dune behind the campsite. On the other side we found a couple of small slopes at which point I offered John the car keys to see if he





wanted to have a go – my Dad did not. That was the last I saw of the car-keys until it was time for John to leave. Talked John through the various things about heading up a dune and its crest etc and he was off up his first little one. We looped around to repeat a few more times as he got a feel for the situation with Andrew also looping with us. John was enjoying the experience. The call came on the radio and we headed out to join the others on their way to the dunes around Hill Seven. Headed up the dune behind the campsite to cross into the campsite and join the others. The Jackaroo was up and over with John finding out that steering not quite as responsive in sand as on the bitumen. In the meantime Andrew did not quite have enough momentum so was stuck. Grant came along and a gentle tug later problem



was solved. As with every other time the cars were halted the children poured out and were into the dunes, climbing, rolling and digging happily even chanting “bog, bog, bog” while driving to give more opportunity to get out.

We played around the Figure Eight area with some steeper sections for John to get a feel on. It was time to tackle the “training side” of Hill Seven. Mark led the way, the top was soft so a few attempts were needed to get over. Chris was next in the green Pajero

and a few attempts saw him up and over. Andrew was not too sure but figured he’d try one attempt. That was encouraging enough to try another and then another which saw him up and over. It was the Jackaroo’s turn. I asked John if he’d like to try, he was not sure so I said that was fine, then he thought I’ll give it a go. We chatted through what to do and what not to do lined it up and we were off. Made it first go, crested the top neatly and John was pretty happy with the whole experience. That left Grant who also took a few attempts to get up and over the rim. Once at the top the cars parked and the drivers had a look at the face of Hill Seven with its very soft top the last two to three metres of it being particularly steep. Mark and Grant both decided to attempt to climb it unsuccessfully it turns out but still interesting to watch. Then introduced John to driving down a dune when it was time to take my Dad back to the campsite as he needed to head out – thanks for coming out Dad!



We rejoined the group to find them at some dunes South(?) of Hill Seven having a play. There was one steep section that saw us making a sharp left turn through some very soft sand at the top. John did not quite make the turn and so came to a halt in not being able to go forward – coaching for reverse and we gradually went down a little bit where it was flatter. In the



process got a little too close to some of the flora with the result of a few more scratches – oh-well we did not buy the car to be a show-room model. The flatter area was enough to give John a run-up and we were up and over. After playing around that area, watching out for roots and sticks that could spike a tyre we moved on.

Returning to an area we had tried previously Mark took a new track through it calling Chris through. Chris took a different turn somewhere in the process and ended up against a tree unable to go forward, backward or to either side and there he was. We eventually gathered around to witness a snatch-strap recovery with one Pajero helping another – how nice. The snatch set-up and it was time to pull out. A small tug did not work, nor did a slightly larger one. Time for a bit more, if that did not work it would be winching. It worked and the car sprung out – a bit of a talking point especially when certain trees were passed. So far the only car that had not been bogged was the Jackaroo but there was still time left – not that we intended to bog it.



Mark found another track and over he went, and then went Chris by now seeming to be having a good time getting to know the situations. Andrew was next and he paused at the wrong point result, one wheel suspended (the left rear) and the others buried. Mark headed up to help him taking a left turn to go around Andrew with the result he was also stuck with a wheel suspended – the right rear. Andrew and I thought we might be able to shovel his car



out with some gentle shoulder work to nudge it. While we shovelled Grant positioned himself to get Mark out which was duly done. In the meantime the shovelling and shoulder nudging did not work so Chris's Pajero came up and provided a gentle pull to bring the Suzuki out. Chris had not expected to be a recovery vehicle.



With less than an hour left before John needed to head off we travelled over to the side-slope area approaching from the direction of Hill Seven. A small track led across the crest over to the side-slope. The track looked reasonably straight forward so Mark led the way – it proved to be quite soft and momentum was needed. Mark also indicated that a bump at the top could be expected as if you did not have enough momentum you would not make it but once at the top you would have perhaps a bit too much to avoid the bump. It was soon John's

turn in the Jackaroo. We headed up but did not have quite enough momentum to clear the top

rather just enough to plant the car on the ridge with the four wheels spinning. John had achieved the bogging of the Jackaroo to the delight of the children and also completing the bogging of all vehicles (sorry no pictures). Up came Mark to the nose of the Jackaroo and out came the snatch strap for a gentle tug over. Andrew then had a go but did not make it so he and Grant came around the other way. In the meantime Chris had another go and got stuck. During the subsequent recovery we decided, along with Andrew, to play on the side-slope giving John a feel for the conditions which he also enjoyed – definitely difficult to get the keys



back. It was time for John to head home and for us to prepare for dinner so back to the campsite we headed. Andrew had lost the same piece of body work as he had in June, back to the repair work drawing board. Looks like he and the family had fun, as they said their farewells. John too enjoyed himself as did his son James. With their departure we were back to four cars. Settled around the fire to prepare the camp oven, roast marshmallows, recount the activities of the day plus other stories including fishing and admire the close approach of Mercury with the star Spica. Grant and Mark discussed making an ash tray from a beer bottle to which Amie and I looked somewhat



quizzically so a demonstration was in order. The first attempt ended up with the bottle a



ashes. Still the principle was suitably demonstrated and Amie is keen to give it a go.

molten mess that was rescued from the fire moulded into somewhat of an ash tray shape. and deposited on the sand by the fire and A little later the result was gently tapped with a stick at which point it shattered - the cold of the sand after the heat of the fire was too much. A second bottle was sourced and placed in the coals. During the course of the evening it ended up being covered by timber so when it came time to check how it was the hunt was on to find the bottle. It was not found (!) so it either moved to a place we did not look or melted away to the bottom of the

The wind had not eased with a blustery night and morning although the temperature was not cold. With breakfast and clean-up out of the way it was time to head out, especially as we needed to be back on the road by 11am to make children's sport presentations and birthday parties. Steve and his family joined us in their Land Rover Discovery TD5 for the day. We headed out to the now semi-familiar territory of Hill Seven.

The blowing wind had added a lot of soft material to the top of the dune so it was decided to give that a miss and continue on along the track near the fence. We made it to the end to find it had a path across a small crest with a very soft top. Mark turned his Pajero into a plough with little success so the shovels were called for. We shovelled the top for a while succeeding in wearing a bit of sand between the teeth due to the wind. Mark attempted the slope again and again and like the little red engine he thought he could and eventually he did, although the thought of reversing back to Hill Seven was briefly entertained. It was then Chris's turn, a few attempts and he was over. Steve was next and he took a number of attempts before reversing further for a longer run-up which saw him over. It was then our turn. Up and over we went first pop and according to Mark hanging a front wheel at one point much to the enjoyment of the children. We did a bit more playing around on a number of other tracks some of which gave Steve some downhill practice. All too soon it was time for us to head-back, re-inflate the tyres, hitch the trailer and head home. The others continued on their way to play somewhere in the region of the side-slope.

We had a great time and a big thank you to Mark for leading allowing this to occur!

Coen van Antwerpen  
23<sup>rd</sup> September 2007