



Beachport/Robe/Southend

This trip report started many months back. In fact I guess it pretty much started when Gary said he was going to do the 'Beachport run', because at that time I made a decision to get my name onto the trip list. Not that this constitutes the start of a trip report, because it doesn't, it just worked out that way....or did it, perhaps I/we was set-up?

Anyway, Gary put the trip up, I signalled our desire to be on the trip by including my (and Lynn's) name onto the trip list, and as one might say the rest is history.....so let me tell you a little history.

With a meeting time of 6am at Murray Bridge McDonalds Lynn and I elected to spend the night in a motel at the Bridge. We booked in weeks ahead and on arrival registration was smoothly accomplished and we were soon into our room....basic, but clean and comfortable, and most importantly, QUIET!

As hunger was driving us we spent little time in finding a restaurant to accommodate our evening meal. Just back from the main street we found Wongs Happy Gatherie, a most accommodating Chinese place with plenty of on-street parking.

Back to the motel for a quiet drink over a movie and our night was complete - the air-cond making the room temp most pleasant. Alarm set for 5.45 am in preparation for the morning rendezvous.

Arriving at McDonalds at pretty much smack on 6am we found the place in darkness with only one other 4WD parked in the car park – it was our stand-in Trip Leaders, Geoff & Sue Thompson, who had kindly stepped in for Gary & Judy Christian who were to meet us later in the day after returning from visiting family in Victoria.

Within the next few minutes vehicles were coming from everywhere and not just our group either. There were hungry brickies, sparkies and the like queuing for breakfast. But disappointment reigned, the McDonalds Manager informed us that due to a problem with the safe they couldn't take any orders....*GO FIGURE!*.....This took a while to sort, but eventually the staffed worked out that they could serve us IF we had exactly the correct money. So being a group of people with high ingenuity we were soon seated with food and coffee abounding....well the coffee is another story! But @\$% was that room cold, we all agreed minus 4 would have been close.

After much ado the group completed paper work and was soon preparing to leave. 7 vehicles in all; Geoff & Sue in their 100 Series Cruiser as our Leaders, Mike & Christine in a Toyota Traytop (Canopy included), Brian Webber sporting a Disco, Graham & Anthea in their trusty Hi-Lux, Paul & Gayle with their new 80 Series, and Lynn & I bringing up the rear in the Greenbruiser (100Series Toyota).

Apart from needing to accommodate a quick pit-stop at Meningie we had an uneventful trip to the Tea Tree Crossing turn-off, where we headed for the beach on the Coorong. With a



brief morning tea at Tea Tree Camp Ground, where we adjusted tyre pressures for sand driving, we encountered a few less knowledgeable 4 wheel drivers so we shared some info on tyre pressures and gear selection for beach driving – should join a club boys!

It wasn't long before we were travelling south along the Coorong Beach, fishermen everywhere, does that say something? As some of our group were experiencing soft sand beach driving for the first time we positioned the more experienced members of the group between their vehicles to assist as necessary.

Everyone seemed to be handling things quite well, although we did need a little more 'persuasion' from one or two when traversing the sand dune prior to the crossing. The crossing itself was bone dry.

Before too long our radio commentary was intermittently receiving sounds from our illustrious trip leaders Gary and Judy. They were coming north from Kingston and were suggesting that we'd need to get a wriggle on as some areas maybe a little tight with the incoming tide. Well that was enough for one member of our group, he decided we needed to see just how tight we could make it and promptly rolled a tyre off the rim. So all hands on deck, well some, the others took the opportunity to do a bit of fossicking for sea shells and the like.

After some innovative tyre changing techniques (always use a sturdy jacking plate, especially in sand) we were once again on our way.

Lunch in the local park at Kingston was most relaxing as we enjoyed idle chat recounting the mornings drive. Regrouping at the local lighthouse and we were soon back on the beach and heading towards Cape Jaffa. One can easily see why developers have targeted this area – very pretty. With all the new development we had to leave the beach and skirt the new boat haven – massive.

In some areas the beach was quite soft, the tide fairly high and some larger wash-aways were being encountered. It was just here, south of Wright Bay I think, we passed a few 'friends' from a couple of other clubs who had stopped for afternoon tea. The sand is very deep here and we have the need to engage some recovery techniques in the lead group. We also come across some travellers who have rolled a tyre (quite severely) and are blocking progress for others due to their quite perilous location. After having assistance refused we push on, safely negotiating our way past and heading high up into the safety of a ridge track. This track takes us through a small fishing area and local camp where we meet a gravel road – Gary decides as it's reasonably late into the day we should 'air-up' and make our way to our camp for the weekend.

On arriving at Southend we are greeted at the campground gate by Bruce and Denise Richardson who have come ahead (doing a bit of recky work) with their caravan. Later we learn they are on the front end of a fairly lengthy trip that will see them take in the 4WD Muster – I'm envious to say the least.

Tents up, happy hour in progress (it must be 6 o'clock) we are greeted with the news that there's a total fire ban and anyone wishing to cook will need to take their food and cooking



stuff to the beach – too hard me thinks just eat more happy hour nibbles! Anyway it's here where the group gangs up on Lynn and I! Judy has devised a creative way of determining who should write the trip report....and yep you guessed it, we win hands down! Thanks guys! Just be warned, I/we now have a significant group on the potential trip report writers list.

Morning dawns with little change to the weather...hot, hot, hot! So it's off to the beach to cook breakfast and Lynn takes a cool dip to the amazement of many. With the dishes done (thanks Sue) we're on our way for the drive via the beaches from Southend to Carpenter Rocks – there's some challenging stuff today!

Bruce is leading us as he 'mapped' a significant amount of this area yesterday while he was waiting for us to arrive. We enter the Canunda National Park via the northern access point at Southend. Bruce heads straight for Geltwood Beach via McIntyre Beach stopping occasionally for photo shots (is Sue up to 200 yet?)

For those that don't know it, Geltwood Beach and Canunda Beach hold some of the most treacherous sand driving in Australia. So, it's little wonder that with today's heat even the 'cruisers' are finding things a little hot and hard going. The group divides into two in some areas, with some taking the more difficult beach run and the others taking the less stressful track just behind the dunes. In doing this we manage to get all vehicles safely to Carpenter Rocks where enjoy a well earned break.

The scenic route is our way back to Southend. We see the back of the huge wind farm we saw earlier in the day, over Lake Bonney, and learn some interesting facts on wind farms. Later as we move through the Millicent area we discuss the local employment and some of the issues we see that relate.

Arriving back in camp we once again partake of a short happy hour, with people disappearing now and then for the shower as were on our way out for dinner at the Beachport Hotel tonight.

The run to Beachport via Rivolo Bay is quite unadventurous but very interesting. Many are out for a last minute dip and others are settling in for night's fishing, there's kids and animals running around everywhere – we'll have to keep our eyes wide open on the return trip.

The meal and the company at Beachport is unsurpassed. The service in this busy pub could improve, but the food is excellent!

By about 9.30 we are back on the beach travelling back to camp. It's interesting to see the fishing rods with their tips lit up, swaying in the night airs. The drive along the beach is quite dark, waves sounding their way ashore somewhere to our right and the beach is punctuated with fishermen and campers at infrequent intervals. And of course almost every trip has to have one....the local on the UHF "dribbling".

Breakfast time and the beach once again is our friendly kitchen and yes she's swimming again (while I cook).

Today Paul and Gayle and Brian Webber are taking the bitumen back to Adelaide and Bruce and Denise are continuing on interstate, so the group diminishes. With everything packed we



head for Beachport again but this time to find some more sand driving and some excellent coastal views.

After taking care of some necessities at Beachport Gary takes us via the beach through to 5 Mile Drift (that's some sand hill). Several need to practice this climb a couple of times, it's good learning experience.

From here we experience some tightly winding tracks, soft narrow beaches, wide hard beaches, fabulous rocky outcrops and the old 'geographic' sight as we get nearer to Nora Coreina.

Departing Nora Coreina we enter Little Dip Conservation Park. It's here Gary & Judy have to bid us farewell and travel back to family in Victoria.

The tracks and beaches through Little Dip to Robe are too numerous to mention, suffice to say they offer some beautiful scenery and some driving that will challenge even the very best in four wheel drivers.

At Robe we find the wind is gathering momentum and the skies are darkening, could this be rain? The Dorrestyn family hit the bitumen and the group is now the smallest it's been for the weekend.

We venture on – travelling the entire length of Long Beach from Robe to Cape Thomas, pretty easy stuff but a nice drive all the same. Just on from Cape Thomas is where we left the beach on our first day – we decide to retrace our tyre marks. But very soon we find the landscape has changed dramatically and after a little demo in how to bog a tray top, we decide to find an alternative route.

It's just after this point where Lynn and I decided that it was time to head home – we bid the group farewell and here endeth the trip report – suffice to say that we got home well before midnight!

Thanks to all for a great trip, I'm sure many gained invaluable experience and met and enjoyed the company of yet some more friends.

Martin & Lynn