

Advanced Driver training

November 16 2008

Ian McKinley – Rodeo – trip leader.
Anthony “Shrek” Barker
Roger Sheath and Carl Bleazard – Patrol
Colin Ellis – Jackaroo
Ron Mason – Mazda BT50
Chris Keys – Patrol (reporter)

This trip was meant to challenge us in the practicalities of recovery in more difficult circumstances – but under controlled circumstances. The objective of the day was to get vehicles in positions where our recovery gear was to be used. (rather than when do it by accident!)

Meeting at the Shell at Lithgow before we convoyed off to where we do our regular driver training. We started at the usual quarry site with a lot of wheel placement exercises and trying the more difficult ascents and descents for a bit of warm up.

We didn't go too much further till we had a badly rutted track to ascend rather than take the chicken track we would have normally. We had to straddle the ruts, cross over some points and pick a good line. Shrek led the way up using a fair bit of momentum. I was next and got myself nicely stuck with back wheel in a big hole and drivers wheel hanging the air. A good exercise in manual winching. A lot of discussion of the issues, selecting a suitable line for the hand winch, tree attachment, setting up lines, protocol, recovery leader, safety issues, etc. I got to use all my gear!

We moved on to some quite rocky ascents and descents which provided exercises in picking a line for your vehicle and managing momentum. A bit of creek crossing before we headed up along a long ridge which gave us some good options for future campsites and access to the Cox's river.

Ian picked an interesting ascent for a power winch exercise with the vehicle behind pulling the vehicle in front up the hill “out of trouble” about 5 metres. This exercise resulted in a lot of discussion and a system using two snatch blocks to keep the recovered vehicle heading in a straight line up the hill.

It was really very instructive to try some of these activities in a controlled manner before you had to rely on these techniques for real.

And it was interesting to see a commercial training group doing the similar but easier route. Lots of bumps, bashes, some underbody damage to a few of their vehicles – no damage to our vehicles despite taking on the harder challenges – quality training and implementation. Thanks to our driver trainers Ian and Shrek once again.

A great day with not too many white knuckles moments – just enough.

Chris Keys