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## Ladies Driver Training February 24<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> Author: Rob and Julie Clark

The weekend commenced under the heading of Ladies Driver Training but 31 hours later 32 people stood for the final photo shoot – what a weekend!

On Saturday at 9:00 am Mary Keys, Michael Zabellero, Bronwyn Michie, Rick Almeida, Colleen Bleazard, Giselle and Richard Budd, and Julie and I met at Ian and Rhonda's place for the 4wd theory training. After Ian showed us his bar area and welcomed the boys back for the next home brew( I'm sure I heard his invitation) we all got down to the serious stuff.

What followed was 5 hours of instructive tuition which made me feel foolish for some of the bad habits that had been part of our four wheel driving in the past. At the end of the tuition we all had confidence in not only our own abilities but in our vehicles.

Sunday 9:00 am we all met again at the Shell Service Station in Lithgow. Standing there in the chilly wind we were soon joined by Jenni and Rick Vey Cox, Wendy and Paul Budd, Giselles children Kirra and Declan, Helena and Kirsten came with Colleen, Alistair Organ, Anthony Barker ( Shrek), Dylan came with Rick, Bronwyn brought along husband Lachlan with their two children James and Elisa, Roger Sheath, Mary and Chris Keys, Glen and Mitchell Evans brought Joseph, and last but not least Ian and Rhonda McKinley.



Due to the numbers involved we were split into two groups with Ian taking one group and Shrek the other. So after drinking some hot fluids we set off and it was immediately pleasing to see that the convoy procedures were put into practice.

We soon came to our first area that we were to practice our hill starts and so we quickly aired down. My wife Julie had some trepidation but after being taken around by Glen in his Patrol how could you lower yourself to that level Julie) she soon got the confidence up and under the careful eye of Shrek and Al it wasn't long before everyone had come to grips with the hill starts and the wheel placements.

Our next step was to drive the vehicles up to what we thought at the time was a steep gravel track which meant crossing over half way up. We all had a few anxious moments when we watched Michael's Discovery waving a seemingly obsolete front wheel in the air.



After that we all drove around to a clearing where Shrek earned his keep by digging a hole for us all to get "bogged".

Everyone took turns at directing the recovery of each vehicle and in turn being towed or doing the towing. So called "snatch straps" were discarded and the correct straps and procedures were taught to us all. It was at this stage that we all met up again and we are had a bite to eat and various topics were discussed as to who had the best beast out there – Landcruiser's were voted NO.1!



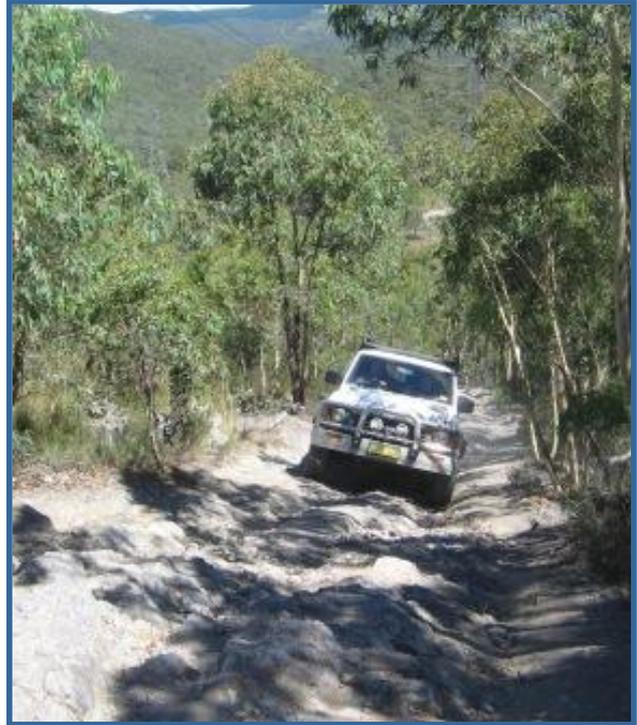
On we all went before doing a tricky hill ascent which tested all the drivers and vehicles and provided the heart with adequate stimulation. Bronwyn showed those that were directly behind her what the underside of a Navara looks like.

Next we came to a water crossing that should be known as Ian's Ford ( excuse the pun) and apart from some minor damage to Bronwyn's Navara we all safely got through to the other side

The last stage was another steep ascent which was followed by a deeply rutted rise at the top and after some initial thought of " we're driving cars not bloody goats" we all got together up the top and congratulated each other. Shrek demonstrated that he would stay upright longer if he stayed in his vehicle rather than to assist us and walk the track.

Then it was time to air back up and take the obligatory photos which if they turned out I would then take the credit for – if not it was Julie's fault.

Speaking of credit, there is so many people to thank with obviously Ian and Rhonda, Shrek, Al, Glen and Roger to name but a few. But this trip threw people together who had one common agenda and that was to learn and to have fun doing it and therefore the credit goes to all of us for making this trip so enjoyable.



See you " Along the Track"