

Trip Report (By Ben Sweetnam)

Friday 13th

Left Sydney mid afternoon with each group making their own way up to Clarence Town. With some loose planning the Mason's met the Sweetnam's on the freeway, with Stan and Noelene a distance TEC. Met up with Glen and Mitchell at the fuel stop in Raymond Terrace and by the time everyone was fuelled and ready to go we had a four car convoy ready to move out. Arrived in Clarence Town around 5pm and headed to the campsite down by the Williams River.

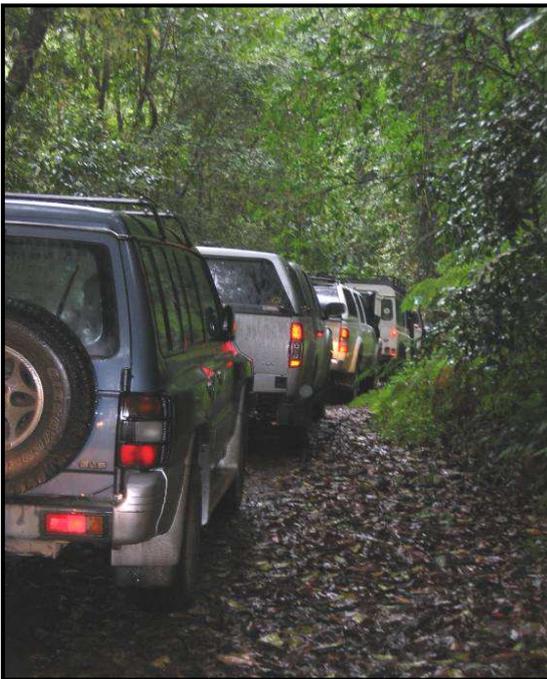
We were suppose to camp on the lower camp grounds but received flood warnings that the Williams River was likely to rise and even break its banks. We moved to the top camp ground and pitched camp just before the rain started. The McKinley's and Yan soon arrived and it wasn't long before we were story telling under the McKinley's communal tarp. We were grateful as the weather had really set in and we were receiving some heavy rain.

Trip Leaders

Ron, Jenny and Toby Mason (And Biscuit)

Attended

Glen and Mitchell Evans
Ian and Rhonda McKinley
Stan and Noelene Kynoch
Ben, Gis, Connor and Zoe Sweetnam
Yan Froberg
Rod and Liz Cole



Saturday 14th

Up early and after breakfast were ready to head out by about 9.30am with Rod and Liz driving up for the day to join us on our trip. Drove through Dungog taking the Stroud Rd up into the state forest where we found the tracks in good condition considering the rain the area had received over the past week. With a light but steady rain, Ian explained these were better driving conditions that post rain because it kept our tyres clean and stopped the tracks from getting greasy and slippery.

Our first track saw us climb up to the Knob look-out, where because of the weather, we couldn't see much at all. We then returned down and slowly made our way down to Chichester Dam taking a range of tracks that saw us climb from sea level up to 950m's above and then return down as we made our way down to the Dam for lunch.

We stopped for about 30 minutes at a nice little area with tables, shelters and toilets below the dam and had a bite to eat. After a nice but wet break - still raining, we headed down towards Karuah River to cross and head off on some more tracks.



At the river we found strong currents and cloudy water where we couldn't see any obstacles so Ian and Ben walked the crossing. They discovered soccer ball size rocks next to drop offs beneath the water; so that with the strong current it was decided that the crossing should be aborted and instead we head back up the way we came. Ian removed the ½ doz. leaches from his legs and we were off again.



We continued on a range of tracks through the afternoon and slowly made our way back to Dungog where we stopped to air up and have a coffee break. Ian drove the town in search of a nice hot pie, only to return with a streets ice-cream, claiming this was the closest he could get, that the bakery doesn't bake pies on a Saturday. We finished our coffees and ice-creams and headed back to camp (still in heavy rain).



Arrived back at camp around 3.30pm as the rain really set in and it poured down all night long. This saw us huddled around under Ian's tarp standing on wooden planks that were suppose to be Ian's floor for his annex in about 2" of water, with a nice waterfall streaming off the end of the tarp.

This provided hours of fun for Toby, Connor and Zoe with Mitchell providing a steady stream of Corona bottles for them to play with. That night we received 8" or 24cm of rain in approx 6hrs which saw wide spread flooding around the whole Dungog / Clarence Town area.

Sunday 15th

Woke in the morning to break camp and were lucky for an hour of dry skies to load our wet and soggy equipment before the weather set in again. The only highlight to the morning was Ian and Rhonda drove into Clarence Town where Ian was able to enjoy the best Steak and Pepper pie he has had in 5 years. By all reports Rhonda's shepherds pie was quite good as well.

It took us a while to get out of Clarence Town with some roads cut and detours in place. Once out we headed towards Cessnock through Maitland, which saw wide spread flooding and some evacuations. We continued down to the Wollombi Pub for lunch where Jack and Pam Simpson drove up to meet us. After a nice lunch it was decided that we would not do any tracks and instead take a nice drive through on the old highway to come out at Mt White and head home. Along the highway we all started to split up and all took turns saying goodbye.

Despite the weather it was a good trip, as new members of the club, and our camping L-Plates still around our neck's we learnt a fair bit camping in such extreme conditions. I would like to thank the Mason's for leading the trip, Glen and Mitchell for providing huge support through the torrential rain on Saturday night and everyone for making the trip enjoyable for all.