

Dry Creek Station Trip – Day 1  
Ian Vercoe, Nissan Terrano, Dunedin

Are you the 'Southern Man' queried Mrs Dorsey at the Oamaru rendezvous point.... "No... that'll be Pat, and he's sheltering from the rain back in the truck" I modestly replied and added "I'm Ian and I am from Dunedin".

"Welcome to the trip and the rain" was the reply.

Having fuelled up with diesel and caffeine on arriving at Oamaru we were optimistic the steady rain that was falling was coastal. After perusal of the map kindly handed out by Mrs Dorsey and a brief wait for any late comers, we duly headed off for Fairlie via Pareora George. As predicted the rain ceased as we drove through Albury enroute to a rather entertaining fuel stop at Fairlie. The entertainment being provided by the pump attendant who having filled up a Toyota corolla with petrol proceeded to charge the young lady driver for diesel. The young female driver nor her mother were non the wiser till being stopped as they were about to exit the forecourt. I did observe the car had a yellow square with 'L' in the back window. From that point on things became rather 'Faulty Towers' like as we all realized we had been charged for each others diesel. One member starting to think his vehicle had all of a sudden become super fuel efficient as he had just paid for our \$10.00 fuel bill.

On departing from the fuel shop that member had the last laugh as he watched us proceed towards Tekapo rather than take the right turn to head towards the north. A bemused radio call had the black Nissan back on the right track. Heading towards Dry Creek took us past Lake Opuha and onto the dry dusty road we encountered on the Clayton Pack Track trip. Not for long as a brief shower dampened the dust as we proceeded to the accommodation block at Dry Creek Station. We were greeted by Ron, Neville and Curly who had



established camp and then proceeded to a brief lunch stop. With the cloud cap looking ominously low the convoy of 7 vehicles proceeded north alongside the 'Phantom River'.

The track was well formed gravel giving way to typical farm access track surface. Ron who was officiating as trip leader informed us that were not alone for the weekend as there was also a group of trampers and a shooting party in the area. The encouragement from the fact that there were others who had greater optimism regarding the weather was soon shattered as shortly after we passed the tramping party the first hale stones began to bounce off the bonnet. Better us than them we mused. Despite the light hale the track surface remained reasonably easy, the odd small stream being encountered and negotiated with ease. After passing over the 'saddle' we negotiated a basin that was notably very lush and remarkably free of matagauri. The track surface being extremely smooth was soon to give way to stone and clay. With the hale shower becoming more persistent we approached an intersection which posed a dilemma for our trip leader. The dilemma being the right turn kept us on a low track heading to another low lying saddle towards the headwaters of the Opuha river, a preferable option given the hail was persisting and the outside temperature had tracked down to 4 degrees, or take the

left turn option which meant heading upwards towards the source of the precipitation. The left option was chosen as the track that would allow us to complete the loop back to camp so onwards and upwards we headed. It was noticeable as the track gradient got steeper, and the clouds got closer, the thread of the discussion on the radio channel was remarkably different to the earlier discussion about growing of orgasmic beans in a greenhouse at Kakanui for home use and the subsequent interest taken by a couple of the local female teenagers!

The often heard quote “how quickly things can change in the high country” was certainly being worked through at this point of the trek. As we ascended the track up the side of the slope a wash out had accumulated sufficient moisture to present a challenge to the tail end vehicles. At this point the ‘southern man’ was not keen on testing the waterproof abilities of the wet weather gear. A quick tow for the Toyota and it was our turn to negotiate the washout. Aided by the expert advice from Neville delivered via the radio the Nissan managed to wheel spin its way through the greasy washout. Shortly afterwards we heard the all clear call from tail end Charlie and the ascent continued.

Whilst the greater elevation improves the view, we had climbed up to a 988 meter trig, the greater the descent. Add the effects the hail and rain were having on the track surface, one very quickly realized great care was required for a drama free ride to the valley floor. All vehicles safely descended to the valley floor where the track followed the head waters of the Orari River. No sooner had the



track become somewhat easier to drive, the call came over the radio for the southern man to mobilize to the front of the convoy with his shovel. Within minutes the many shovels had cleared

the small slip and the convoy moved on to follow and cross the Orari River heading towards base camp. As the trek had taken less time than was anticipated a decision was made to retrace our steps and head towards the Phantom River route following another stream.

Whilst this deviation provided some additional opportunities to test vehicle ground clearance and suspension travel, we ultimately encountered a dead end. Retracing our steps once again, we ended up at the locked gate which enabled us to head back to base camp via Lochaber Road. As we debriefed over suitable refreshment we watched the steady rain fall temporarily transforming Dry creek into a very wet creek.

Teaming up with Pat (alias ‘Southern Man’) for the trip meant we could share the drive and thus enabled us to opt for the 1 day option. The subsequent report that the intrepid stayers and players woke up on Sunday morning to the area completely blanketed in snow had ‘southern man’ smiling. The main off road challenge encountered on day 2 was negotiating the Meikleburn Saddle. “Better us than them” remarked southern man as he enjoyed another sip of his latte.

Many thanks to the Beatties for access, thanks to Stan, Ron, Neville and Curly for organizing the trip.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Safe New Year.

Footnote.

For a pictorial view of this trek and others I have participated on go to the internet address

[offroad.earthlight.co.nz](http://offroad.earthlight.co.nz)

the web site is kindly sponsored by earthlight, new zealands oldest internet service provider