

## Reading the Pareora River & Viewing the Valley of the 'Moa'

The weather forecasters predicted a nice day in South Canterbury on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> of October and it certainly was as 18 trucks crossed the bridge over the Pareora River and immediately turned hard left off SH1 to gather for the trip briefing. On inspecting the fleet of vehicles one could not help but let ones gaze linger a little longer on the 2 very modern silver coloured suvs joining us for the day. Being an avid reader of motoring magazines I was well aware of the technology and the 'off the tarmac' traction capabilities of these 'state of the art all wheel drive vehicles'. One could not help but glance a while on the VX Landcruiser with rather large flotation tyres and generously enhanced suspension. Its presence looked purposeful and incredibly brawny. Ones musings ended with a somewhat secure feeling – if the technology fails, radio the friendly horsepower. However as the saying goes, 'seeing is believing', and today we were privileged to the seeing the real thing – it's only as good as the 'nut' behind the wheel!



The first challenge greeted the fleet immediately trip leader Ron decided to turn left to embark on the first of the many river crossings. The track chosen lead to a very steep drop over the edge of the river bank so a quick back track and a track with a more moderate drop was taken. After a few of the higher ground clearance vehicles negotiated this bank in front of a large gallery it was decided that some of the lower ground clearance vehicles would be wiser to rendezvous further up the river. Most of the drivers who chose to negotiate this hazard had a good opportunity to inspect and plan their approach, unfortunately some overlooked the necessity to check they had engaged 4 wheel drive and thus the first 'towing' opportunity arose. In no time at all the group proceeded up the river, encountering crossings of various depths. One was able to experience the various gravel surfaces, ranging from very loose and soft gravel to large boulders. In no time at all we were treated to a variety of displays.



These displays included how to wash the inside of your jeep with out opening the doors, how much quicker a jeep will go with the current even if it is in reverse, and if you don't succeed in drowning your truck on the first attempt, find a deeper part of the stream and try again. The display concluded with the hooking up the towrope and the application of some serious horsepower. Remember that secure feeling!

Fortunately some members of the gallery took the opportunity to pick a less challenging route to cross this part of the stream. This meant the rest of the fleet progressed to the next crossing ably led by the silver Range Rover.

Alluvial rivers mean a variety of channels so our next crossing was a rather narrow fast flowing channel with a firm bottom, however we could also see the presence of several boulders.

Add a very slippery and steepish exit path and ..... gotcha!

It was a triple gotcha, as before our very eyes was one very stuck VX Landcruiser.

Not only was it stuck but it had a broken starter motor. BUGGER!

We were then given a practical demonstration of a double tow with an up size option of a 'pull start' to finish. 'Multiple horses' provided the horsepower – now that's security!

The encore was suitably performed by a suzuki vitara successfully crossing the channel, albeit with a sideways stance and not a tow rope in site.

Not to be out done by a Range Rover the VW Touareg proceeded to chart a less challenging river crossing which the remaining vehicles followed. The appearance of a group of people striding down the river track and gathering on a bank indicated the fleet were about to encounter



another interesting water crossing. This crossing posed the 'Depth Deception' test. A large rapid was preceded by a pool of smooth water. The appearance of sizeable bow waves being pushed up the vehicles indicated the pool was deep. What was not so apparent was the softness of the exit route if one exited the water too far up stream from the rapid. 2 passengers in the back seat of a blue Nissan Terrano advised their driver of this fact without hesitation when they experienced very wet seats and it wasn't because they were having a 'senior moment'. The front passenger lifting his legs up so they wouldn't get wet reinforced the serious consternation coming from the back seat! Unfortunately for the driver, the more he tried to alleviate them from this predicament the worse it got.

In no time at all a static tow was underway and the Nissan was on dry ground, only to become very wet ground when all the doors were opened.

The crew of red jeep who were were experiencing a 'de ja vous' feeling decided prudently to fix a tow rope prior to attempting this crossing, however they successfully negotiated the crossing unaided. With the fleet and drivers regrouped it was time to leave the river and head for a well earned lunch break at Maungati reserve.

After lunch the group proceeded to the 'Valley of the Moa'.

Our route took us via a short forest track challenge which was quite a contrast to reading the river. Trip leader Ron's musing over the radio 'that it may require chains' was greeted with a range of reactions. Notably the drivers of the 'start of the art' vehicles offered to leave the vehicles parked at the bottom, had they forgotten to pack the chains or did they want to walk the rest of the way?

The site of the black Mu trimming the gorse bushes on the side of the track on its first attempt certainly caused some hesitation. On closer inspection this was a very damp and muddy track. It had enough 'off' camber to entice the front end into the water table if steering was lost due to front wheel spin or understeer due to excessive speed. However a certain amount of power was needed as the track had a considerable gradient. One required a fine balance of speed without excessive power.

The exact conditions for the modern electronic traction control systems to prove themselves – and prove themselves they did. All vehicles negotiated the challenge without drama so it was onto view the 'Moa'.

The valley is located amongst the Craigmores hills. The surrounding farm is home to the family of the late Peter Elworthy and his wife Fiona.

Maungati is Maori for mountain or hill of the cabbage tree, and Craigmores is Gaelic for the large limestone cliffs. Limestone sink holes are formed by underground limestone eroding. The district is also known as for its umu ti: large ovens in the ground where Maori cooked the roots and stems of young cabbage trees to make kaura, a carbohydrate food containing fructose. (*extract from www.craigmores.com*)

The huge limestone cliffs lining the valley were amazing as was the vista of Mount Cook to the north.



In no time at all the cameras were furiously clicking to capture the naturally sculptured figure of the 'Moa' on the adjacent hill. Time was taken to allow the energetic to climb up to the foot of the cliffs and inspect the maori carvings and take in the view of the surrounding countryside.

A final stop for mid afternoon refreshments and a debrief was held at Mt Nimrod Reserve. The fleet then headed towards Waimate and southwards for home. A very pleasant Sunday drive with a difference. Members who require options to reduce their annual taxation payments were given an opportunity to view a couple of choices

without compromising their ability to go off the track. Members who have no need for such decisions enjoyed a great opportunity to enhance their 'River Crossing' knowledge and demonstrated that no matter what technology you have – it still depends on the 'nut' behind the wheel!

Thanks Ron for organizing a great day.

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