

Trip Report

Views and Contrasts of the Strath Taieri May 2005

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Saturday

By 10.30 on Saturday morning the occupants of 11 4 wheel drive vehicles had arrived at Waikouaiti, visited the local bakery, consumed a coffee or 2 and introduced themselves to the group as part of the trip briefing. On concluding the briefing Keith Rowland proceeded to lead the group to Bucklands Crossing and Blucher Road. A brief stop was undertaken so the group could take in the view which ranged from Puketapu, near Palmerston, following the south east coastline around to Karitane.



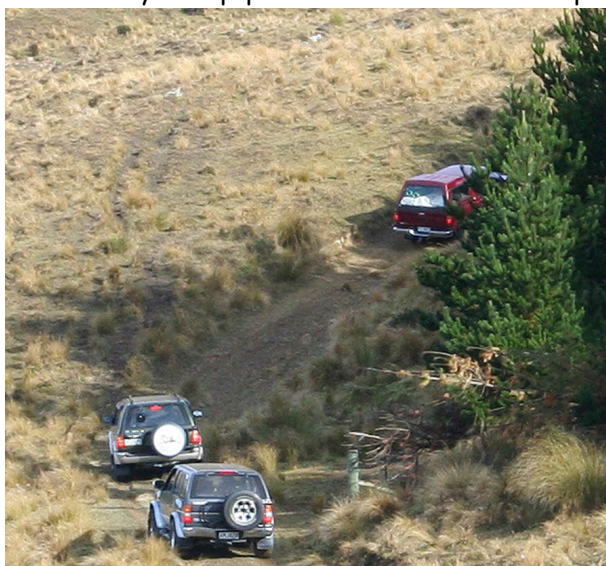
The twisting undulating razorback sections of Blucher Road were enhanced by the pockets of fog encountered as the group proceeded to the sheep run called 'Ben Doran'. The horses and the rock outcrops were magnificently silhouetted by the fog and the sun.

The name 'Ben Doran' originates from the Gaelic phrase 'Stormy Mountain'. On taking in the spectacular views of the fog swirling through the gullies and enveloping the ridges one would have to agree the run was aptly named.

As the group enjoyed the company of a variety of friendly mustering horses, the high double gates which lead to the farm track were opened. At this point the group encountered a slight ascent and a track surface consisting of damp loose soil offering no grip at all. Leader Keith successfully negotiated the incline, however half of the group decided that they would put on their chains while the going was good. With everyone successfully through the slippery patch the group moved on. With a steep drop off to the side and a moist clay surface with minimal vegetation, staying on the track became the focus. Steady progress was made until a very steep pinch in the shadow of a pine tree plantation had the leading Toyota Hilux searching for grip and the person in the passenger seat politely suggesting to Keith that fitting a set of chains might help. The remaining vehicles without chains followed the prompt and set about fitting them.

At this point the 'dew' that had formed on the tussock grasses became a useful source of water for washing hands. Unfortunately one member picked a convenient tussock on the roadside and proceeded to give his hands a really good wash, 'handy tussock that one' he laughed.

Very shortly he realised that the farmer's dogs thought that tussock was a convenient place to relieve themselves as well - Dogs 1, Don 0.



Once the steep damp section of the track was negotiated without any further drama the group moved on with confidence. The track progressed from the easterly side of the hill around to the sunny north side and very shortly we arrived at the first locked gate on the boundary between 'Ben Doran' and 'Lamb Hill'.

As trip organiser I eagerly awaited advice from Keith that he was successful in unlocking the gate.

My concern arose from the fact that the person who agreed to unlock the gate 2 weeks prior to the trip was uncontactable the night before the trip.

The high quality road surface on Lamb Hill meant chains were unnecessary and were removed from vehicles very quickly. Once the member who was seen to be spending considerable time checking the tussocks before he washed his hands on them was rounded up the group proceeded towards Hindon via the summit of Lamb Hill station. The large area under cultivation at such a high altitude generated a lively debate as did the stray deer that was encountered as we descended towards Hindon.

This was a stark contrast to the silence when a call was made over the radio for a trip reporter as the group left Waikouaiti.



The view from the summit over the Strath Taieri area was magnificent, however the area we were heading for was covered in fog.

A stop for lunch beside the Taieri River provided a planned photo opportunity of the Taieri Gorge train, especially for Laurie.

After lunch leader Keith picked up the track that lead alongside the Taieri River and then up a steep but dry ascent to follow Lamb Hill's southern boundary fence towards Roads End run. The group encountered fog as the track gained altitude. Navigating became a team effort between leader Keith and Ron who was 'tail end charlie'.

The group successfully navigated the potentially slippery clay slope and a rather boggy gateway to arrive at the Roads End sheds and yards. A courtesy visit to the homestead of the Hope family resulted in an invitation to a fresh cup of tea.

After a very warm welcome and an appreciative word of thanks the group headed towards Sutton with the members who were heading back to Oamaru disbanding at the appropriate intersection.

After establishing the fact that there were plenty of beds available in Middlemarch and Sutton and that the fog wasn't going to lift in a hurry there was little disappointment that no one had to resort to staying at the Strath Taieri nudist camp. Ron was heard to say that he thought that might be an option when the office person at Blind Billies camp failed to see them when they arrived there to check in.

An evening meal at the Middlemarch hotel was enjoyed by all, some earlier than others. Laurie and Faye's meal arriving after Laurie admitted putting the money Faye had given him in his pocket instead of paying for the meal. The delay was for as long it took Laurie to take the money out of his pocket.

Sunday

The weather outlook from the window of Sutton Camp on the Sunday morning can be summed up in a single 3 letter word - Fog.

At 10 o'clock 6 vehicles left Sutton heading south looking for the road that lead to Rocklands Station. 'Black Thunder' was designated leader for the day and very much felt like 'The Pied Piper' - especially when the incorrect road was taken, which paradoxically lead to 'Hopefield Farm'. Returning to the main road south, not only was the road to Rocklands Station found, the sun was found as well. The group proceeded through the Rocklands Station complex and then turned right and headed up 'The Old Dunstan Trail' towards the Rock and Pillar range. The group then turned left at the turn off to the Te Papanui National Park and proceeded up to the gates of the park to enjoy a magnificent view of the Strath Taieri and the Silverpeaks area. The track progressed from a



grassed surface to a wet slippery clay with a variety of mud holes. Returning towards the Deep Stream ford the group were able to view the catchment area at the foot of the Lammermaw range that is used for the Dunedin City water supply. All drivers took the opportunity to wash the underside of their vehicles in the ford as it is well named - it is deep. The group then headed right along Walshs Road which follows the Deep Stream up into the catchment area. Views of the actual pipeline that transports the water to the city could be seen at various gullies and streams. Access granted by the various farmers allowed the group to travel over rolling farmland enabling a shortcut to Eldorado Road which lead to Lake Mahinerangi and the Waipori Forest area.



The lunch break was held at the Lake Mahinerangi Dam picnic area. The views of the dam and the 'still as a mill pond' lake were very much appreciated. At the conclusion of lunch the group were offered the option of traveling down the Waipori Gorge to the Taieri Plan or traveling through the Waipori and Wenita forest to join up with the main road at Berwick. When the 'keys' to the forest gates were displayed there was no option, 'lets go the forest route'. The group



headed off to view the remains of the Waipori Village and the 2nd of 4 power generating plants that make up the Waipori Power Scheme. The road into the village and the Waipori Gorge was shrouded in beautiful natural bush, providing a stark contrast to the open fields of the Lammermaws.

Proceeding down Shaws Road the group turned right into Glenbyrnie Road, a typical



forest access track with lots of overgrown grass, a clay surface, a shallow water table and a variety of ruts. The track led the group through to an historic glade called 'Browns Hut', enroute 'Black Thunder' encountered a very deep 'under runner' which required a second approach using a different set of ruts.

From this point it was downhill through the forest, into the fog and 'Back to Reality'.

The group debriefed at Berwick Camp and proceeded to head home via Outram.