

# Levuka Trip Report

Bayside Off-Roaders

Aug 13th, 14th.

Part 1

Within the pleasant and relaxing confines of his alcohol and campfire induced innocence this Bayside Off-Roader allowed himself to be '**Tammy Tagged**' to write the Levuka trip report. Well, half of it anyway.

Saturday morning - the weather was perfect – a great omen promising a great weekend. Meeting in Beaudesert with others (the Woodward clan) and checking that guests Heath and Daniela Chandler were on track, our mini convoy headed on to Levuka. It became apparent that just as a black cat crossing ones' path is not a good sign (for some), a beautiful red belly black trustingly venturing unhurried across your road of choice must be good. I'm not sure, however, that the same can be said for the furry morsel hanging from the mouth of a rather large goanna that charged across that same road a few kilometres on. Roos, eagles, butterflies and cattle and their flys came later.

Arriving at the campsite it was obvious that many had come out Fri. and possibly in response to an unseen threat, circled the wagons. It was warm greetings all around. No time to waste – set up camp, lighten the load, tires down and be ready to go for the first jaunt at 9 AM.

Our group (obviously Group One) of 7 vehicles was lead by the intrepid Tony, Sharon & Meagan Collins with Graham & Janet Richter tail ending. Keeping the above separated were Kathy & Kevin Hicks, Jeanette & Mike Woodward, Tony & Jordan Woodward, Heath & Daniela Chandler and Marguerite & Norm Verdec.

This report will not be a track by track account as the names of the tracks were not known then let alone now, by this happy camper at least. We played 'follow the leader' through truly beautiful green country providing open views of the broader region and the mountains to the North. Gullies provided most of the challenges, excitement and driver-training opportunities. A number of these gully tracks were done, I'm sure, to loosen us up for the afternoon capers. One of the nicest characteristics of the group and more widely the club is the friendly comment, encouragement and advice given each other. The candy (oops-lollies) ( watch out for those Canadians) for the gate openers was a really nice touch. Small things can make such a big difference.

Sat. PM started with an all in visit to the 'test track' series of mud holes where most did exceptionally well. Your author, being educationally oriented provided a demonstration opportunity for the less experienced of recovery techniques. This 'being stuck demonstration' was of coarse carried out in an environmentally aware and sensitive manner. While waiting for the world to become right the exhaust was kept underwater such that the carbon dioxide emission would dissolve using the mud pit as a carbon sink thus not contributing to unnecessary global warming. Al Gore would be proud. It also provided for those using cameras with sound a not unpleasant background 'burbling' effect. **Thanks Garth** for playing your part in this 'learning exercise'.

After the test track we separated back into our groups to continue the afternoon. At some point we bounced our way through a segment of rainforest with a few liquid sections. Again a number of gully tracks were driven. One particular track – short but steep, bumpy and a little slippery offered some resistance to some vehicles – well, one at least. Your trip report author did observe that when he deliberately exposed the underside of his vehicle for mobile inspection by those above even the trees seemed to produce cameras. They were thinking, obviously, that perhaps it wasn't intentional and that they might get a snack. Not this time treeus greenuses. Success though, would have to wait. I will add at this point that it is good to report that no Group One vehicles were subjected to involuntary, location specific modifications during the weekend.



After playing at one set of gully tracks our leader Tony was confidently leading the way out but Sharon had to call out to remind him that he might like to do so in his vehicle which he had marched bravely past only just within calling distance ago. He was obviously focused and thinking ahead – nothing of this ‘in the present stuff’ that we peons have to boggle our minds with.

Back to camp for a drink or two and a loo, some food, camaraderie and a chance to swap lies around a fire that would have rivalled Dresden. The technical talk re: ‘lockers’ between Heath and Tony Woodward was indeed most impressive but went more than slightly above the authors’ head and

experience, which was limited to having a fire in mine but that was at school 40 years ago. I digress. “The stars came out and they danced about” (R.Service) and we all went off to bed- well most of us anyway. The midnight loo excursion was rewarding in a couple of ways. The anticipated pressure release –yesssss- or releases as the case may have been for each – always a pleasure – but the sky full of stars really was above and beyond, so to speak. The sound of other tent zippers, squeaky loo doors and sliding rock indicators suggest that others shared the nocturnal ritual. You know you are still young as your bladder hasn’t yet matured to full size - eh.

Sunday and another glorious day to enjoy. A casual breky followed with another drive for some but packing up and heading home by others. Those that stayed started with another transit through the rainforest. This produced, in areas; an experience enjoyed at Water World many years ago where one sat on a plastic mat and was gravity propelled on water down through a tunnel. Here we sat in a vehicle and were gravity propelled on water down through a tunnel. I guess we are still kids, just older. My GPS seemed to be giving evidence of existence and trajectory but no location!! A return to ‘that track’ (a little dryer) and others made it look easy. So --- having fed the horse and whispered in its ear a little description of a knackery, the authors’ steed came good and success at last was very much enjoyed.

Back to camp – final pack up and good-byes then a safe drive home. Again, being environmentally aware this author brought home a sufficient amount of mud that the seeds contained therein would add significantly to genetic and species dispersal in S.E. Qld. probably including (hopefully not) the fireweed identified by Graham Richter. So what was the main lesson learned on the weekend I hear you ask – obviously it is to not drink alcohol until after the trip report authors have been ‘Tammy Tagged’.



Much enjoyed and thanks to all.

Norm Verdec

# LEVUKA TRIP REPORT

Part 2

Saturdays Track driving lead by Garth Allison.

Everybody had arrived and was set up and ready to go driving by 9.30 am.

It was decided to split the group into two, Tony Collins leading one group and Garth led the other. Those of use that went with Garth acting as navigator for his son Brett first headed of into the rain Forest tracks which were quite wet and slippery. We branched of onto another Track along the creek bed this had some surprises with tight turns rocks and mud and not to forget everybody favourite lantana. After we all got out of the creek we headed of to the hills to try our hand on dry tracks with a few steep descents an interesting climbs. We then decided it was close to lunch time so we headed back to camp taking a look

at some great scenery and a couple of tracks with some large mud holes which we all decided to give a wide birth to. Not long after this we bumped into the other group and Tony said there was a good little play area up ahead so naturally of we went and had a great halve hour going backwards and forwards across the gully. Now it was back to camp for lunch.



After lunch it was time to head off again this time all the girls except Sandra Decided to stay at camp for all different reasons (just to relax, read a book, have a sleep, watch the fire, prepare dinner) none of which appear to have happened, more like a lot of mischief instead, but that's for another story. So off we all headed this time the two groups went for a look at the TEST TRACK. For those who wanted to have a go it was good fun with a few cars conquered the log pile at the end of the track.

Unfortunately Norm Verdic decided to leave his run to last and did a great job until the last mud hole where those before him with the heavy right boots had made the hole a bit too deep and slippery for Norm to get through so we had our first recovery of the day

(with more to come). While sitting in his car waiting for the recovery gear to be connected norm was heard to comment that he had never seen so many cameras at once and all taking photos of him. Les discovered what happens when you drive through mud with a window down (Yvonne's seat) but Yvonne's fault for not being in the car to close the window.

The two groups split up again we headed off to try our luck on Rosemary's Road. Garth and Brett only managed to get about 100 meters before they got stuck

So it was Garry Evans to the rescue to tow them out unfortunately for Garry just as he took up the strain his car slipped sideways collecting the LH front door on a tree stump resulting in a bit of panel damage. It was now time to find another way around, so we headed off to knob hill and then on to some other rainforest track. It didn't take long to find something interesting, HAVOC CROSSING; this proceeded to live up to the name. Garth and Brett went first and to their surprise and ours made up the other side so Garry Evans was next but no luck so we began a series of very useful recoveries.

Dallas Allison went next in dad's car luckily he only had a left hand turn (the steering box is not centralized) so it doesn't go round right hand turns very well he also was successful. Next was Les Raine followed by Garry Warren and Sandra and then myself we were all unsuccessful and added to the recovery practice. Robin Newton tail end Charlie" had worked out his line so with everything locked and the right foot hard down showed those of us not to make it how it should be done. By now it was time to return to camp so of we went with only one short track to complete. We all successfully negotiated the last creek crossing with Robin showing us how to do it sideways to which he commented he was just having some fun while Fay was not in the car. We all arrived safely back at camp. Thanks for a great days driving.

Garth and Brett.