

# The Argadells

6th - 8th June, 2009

By Julianne Simpson



With ominous weather forecasts for rain, Daniel and I headed out bright and early on Saturday morning to meet at the rendezvous point of Two Wells. When we arrived we found our group was to be Dave and Sue Samways (trip leaders, Range Rover), Peter Small (Defender), Neil and Kaye Cunningham (Freelander 2), Heather and Kin Roy (Discovery) and of course ourselves (Range Rover). Heather and Kin had already gone up the night before so the rest of us hopped into our cars and headed off. As we travelled along we were cheered by the prospect of good weather as we left the worst of the clouds behind. Other than Neil and Kaye, the rest of us had been at the Argadells the previous year and did not want to get rained out again.

We arrived at the Argadells in the early afternoon without incident after stopping in Snowtown for morning tea and Quorn for our last decent toilet stop. We drove through to cockroach valley which was to be our camping ground and found Heather and Kin all set up. They had hired another Kimberly Kamper for the weekend and they were a little concerned about the awning as it didn't look very steady. It was then that we heard from them that there had been such a ferocious thunder storm the night before that all the people that had

arrived on the Friday night had to camp up the top near the homestead. Being told of thunderstorm wasn't pleasing to the ears, but we hoped for the best and hoped the worst of the weather had past.

After a quick set up the group headed out to drive the South Gorge track. Considering the report of wild weather the night before the tracks were pretty solid and there was not much mud around but Daniel was quiet happy when he found some. The South Gorge track was very pleasant with a couple of hill climbs that we attempted one at a time.

When we arrived back at camp it was cold and the sun was low on the horizon. We started a fire straight away and it started to rain. Everyone scrambled to shelter and rigged up more shelter as required. When the rain stopped we all came out to the fire again. The fire had been built up quite a lot as Daniel and I had bought our camp oven and planned to attempt sausage hot pot. In between showers the hole was dug and we put our camp oven full of vegetables and sausages in the hole with coals surrounding them. Heather was cooking sausages and chops on the fire plate and the others were eating their dinner as they made it, warming themselves by the fire.

After Heather finished cooking her sausages and chops and char grilling some vegetables, she and Kin sat down at their table that they had bought over to the fire to eat their dinner. Then the heavens opened. First of all they tried

eating with Kaye holding an umbrella over them, but then it was getting so bad that everyone abandoned the fire for good. In the meantime our hot pot was still cooking and I thought it must have been taking longer because it was quite cold outside. It wasn't until we pulled the pot out of the hole so that we could finish cooking it on the burner that we realised that, of course, the hole had filled up with water. We finished cooking our dinner under the shade of our awning and then went to bed.

During the night the wind blew and the rain fell. At one stage we could hear someone banging in a peg. From the closeness of the noise we thought it must be Heather and Kin re-pegging their awning. At 6:45am a car in the camp site was started up. I wondered if Heather and Kin had been so frustrated with the awning that they had decided to leave and then I remembered that Heather had said the day before that she was off to Blinman for the day to celebrate 150 years since finding copper there. Kin remained behind to enjoy the tracks from the passenger seat of Peter's car. When asked about the banging Kin explained that the awning had fallen down five times and both he and Heather had been up a number of times fixing it.

After some breakfast, we all headed out to tackle Mt Arden. The morning was quite foggy and Mt Arden was shrouded in cloud but we pressed on. Driving up the mountain, Sue was alerting us to obstacles along the way and advising us when a hill climb needed to be taken one at a time. When Dave and Sue came across a tight muddy corner, they radioed back that although it didn't look very good the outside line was okay and to take the corner wide - advice my husband decided to ignore! Daniel ploughed right into the centre of the thick mud and got bogged. He tried a couple of times to get out without any luck. He

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contemplated backing up but if he didn't stop he would go backwards over the edge of the hill. He tried turning the car a different way and we started to slide sideways. This was my cue to bail out! Standing up on the side of the hill, I watched as Daniel asked Peter to take the hard outside line and pass him so that he could be snatched out of the mess. With this done, I hopped back into the car and we continued on our way.

Once we reached the top of Mt Arden I decided to stay in the car, as I think a number of the others also did as it was freezing cold, covered in low cloud and blowing a gale. Daniel decided to get out and look at the radio tower as we waited our turn to start our descent. While I was sitting in the car I thought my eyes were playing tricks on me because it seemed like the car was slowly rolling backwards. As I tried to determine if the car was rolling I noticed Peter yelling out to Daniel, Your car is rolling! No, I wasn't imagining things I was actually in the car and it was rolling slowly backwards. Daniel raced back to the car and tightened the hand brake. Phew, the last thing I want is to be descending Mt Arden backwards while people are coming up.

Once we had come down from Mt Arden, we headed back to camp for lunch, yummy leftover sausage hotpot that we warmed up on the stove. While we were eating lunch the clouds cleared up and it looked like the rest of the day was going to be relatively nice.

Out for another drive after lunch, we decided to take billy goat track. Along the way we actually saw some goats, I suppose it was called billy goat track for a reason then. We also saw some kangaroos, the sun and to everyone's annoyance, we saw the top of Mt Arden clearly because the clouds had moved away. The afternoon drive was a good one

taking in most of the north of the property with a few minor detours on the way. But even when we weren't sure where we were, our intrepid leaders had us going the right way and we made it back to camp in the late afternoon.

As soon as we arrived back at camp it proceeded to spit. Before the rain got too heavy a dry creek was used for a hoist to look under the Freelander which had suffered a few scrapes, was making a funny noise and had lost a piece of trim but had done amazingly well considering its low ground clearance. We were all impressed.

Heather arrived back at camp in the early evening and we were lucky enough to have the rain stop long enough for us to eat our dinner around the camp fire and have a good old chat. We all headed off to bed a bit after 10pm and I think everyone had a fairly good night sleep. (Heather and Kin had removed their awning).

In the morning Daniel and I slept in and missed saying goodbye to everyone as they all left to make

their own way back to town. Sorry guys!

Once we had packed up, we decided that we would drive another track before heading home. Part of the way along the drive to Steven's Gorge we heard a distress call over the UHF from a guy with a flat battery trying to contact the Argadells homestead. When the homestead replied that they were having trouble hearing the call, Daniel decided to help out, although it was a Toyota, and suggested that we could head over to their campsite because we were out on the tracks anyway. The said guy, his wife and family were so happy to see us and Daniel had the car jump started in no time. With that out of the way we continued on our trek to Steven's Gorge and travelled a couple of the other tracks we hadn't yet driven during the weekend.

Overall I think everyone enjoyed themselves, despite the rain and the wind. And thankfully the tracks weren't half as wet as last year and weren't closed.

