

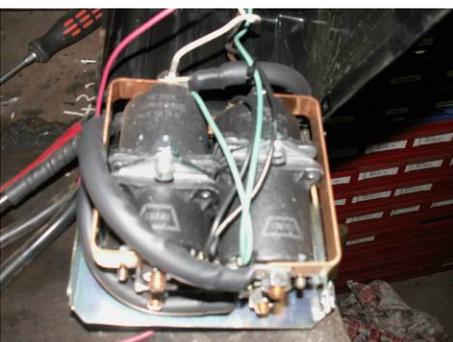
Warn 9.5XP 9500lb Winch

This winch belongs to Mike Hayes and has been mounted on the front of his Defender for about 4 months. It has never been used and in fact had never been connected up! When we stripped this winch the quality of the unit was obvious. All of the attention to detail and quality of components went some way to justifying the price (more than double the cost of the dearest Chinese). Wiring, electrical connections, the motor and the gears were all exceptional. The only negative we found with the XP (and Mike was pretty disappointed) was that sealing of the motor end cover wasn't up to scratch and corrosion of the internal surfaces had already begun.

Warning: Never leave your new Warn winch in the shed with us while you go outside to take a phone call.

Mikey did and we swapped his new 6HP motor for this burned out old one.

Unfortunately he did notice the difference.....



ebay 9500lb Winch

I bought this winch on ebay from an "ebay shop" for around \$400.

These winches are the main reason for deciding to do this testing. Having seen so many requests for opinions on "cheap Chinese winches" I did a bit of research and bit the bullet and bought one. Within a week the parcel arrived and the stripdown and inspection could begin.

Externally it looked a lot like a winch—well what else can I say? When we stripped it we were disappointed in most areas, not least with the quality of electrical connections and the poor insulation around the motor. When we hardness tested the gears we found the three gears to be hard, medium and soft, which didn't look good for longevity.

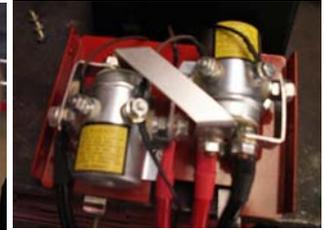
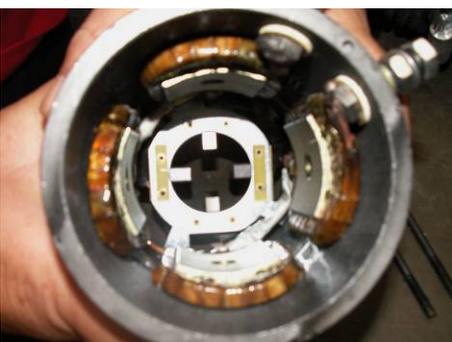
General assembly was OK but not really good enough for an item like a winch on a 4WD. This winch was installed into an ARB Commercial Winch Bar on an 80series Landcruiser. We made up some 12mm thick steel spacers to fit between the bar and the winch as the winch is too wide. Other than this, the winch bolted straight onto the bar.

BEFORE TO PREVENT OVERHEATING OF THE BRAKE UNNECESSARY HEATING OF THE BRAKE

1. TO ENGAGE CLUTCH, MOVE CLUTCH SHIFTER TAB FULLY AND LOCKED TO THE "ON" POSITION. WINCH IS NOW READY FOR PULLING IN THE LOAD.

MAX. LINE FULL RATING AND CABLE CAPACITY BY LAYER			
LAYER	MAX. SINGLE LINE PULL	CUMULATIVE CABLE CAPACITY	
	(lbs)	(kgs)	(ft) (m)
1	9500	4300	16 (5)
2	7700	3480	42 (13)
3	6500	2940	72 (22)
4	5700	2580	94 (29)

WINCH IS FOR INTERMITTENT DUTY ONLY. OPERATION BEYOND RATING VOIDS WARRANTY.



Ironman4x4 9500lb Winch

The Ironman4x4 winch was a late arrival and was stripped and inspected separately. Externally and internally it is very similar to the TerrainTamer with a few small differences in detail but overall it is of similar quality and construction. Both companies claim to have made their own changes to the specification and build of the winches and although this is evident in some areas its hard to tell (visually) if one is superior.

The Ironman winch arrived just at the right time as the ebay winch had just lunched itself so this one went onto the 80series. As per the notes about the ebay winch, its an ARB Commercial Winch Bar with some 12mm thick steel spacers. This winch also bolted straight onto the bar.



ARB Magnum 9000lb Winch

ARB lent us one of their Magnum 9K winches which is marketed as a budget alternative to their Warn range. As it is a 9000lb winch we haven't included it in our testing but may do so in the future.

Although we wouldn't be physically testing it, we stripped down the winch for inspection. Component and assembly quality appears to be very good and it generally appears to be an excellent winch

Somewhere down the track we would like to put this winch through its paces and see how it performs against the 9500lb winches.



Winch Testing Part 2

the long haul

We found a suitably long, straight and steep hill for this part of our testing which enabled us to spool out the full 38 metres of rope. At the top of the hill our winch vehicle was secured and the cable pulled out leaving 10 turns of rope on the drum. We then attached our Ammeter to the power cable between the battery and the winch (control/solenoid box actually) and the temperature probe to the winch motor. At the bottom of the hill we have a LandRover Defender as our "test weight".

This test would allow us to fully test each winch in a repeatable exercise without excessively working the winches.



The Test - Winching a Land Rover Defender up a moderate slope. Testing involved a cycle of 90second pull time with a 60 second recovery period until the Defender had been pulled 30m up the hill. All stops and start times were accurately followed to ensure fair comparison and repeatability. Winching was started with 10 turns of rope on the winch drum. Winch and batteries were given a 10minute (timed) break before the test was repeated.

Note for the pedantic – battery capacity and condition can have an effect on winch performance but as we are real world testing there is no way to control this variable. We aren't claiming these figures to be any more than a real world indication of winch performance.

For reference the following are the supplied specs from the manufacturers for the Terrain Tamer and the Warn.

Terrain Tamer (and the other similar chinese winches) Factory Specs

Line Speed & Current Draw (First Layer)

Layer of Cable		1	2	3	4
Rated Line Pull Per Layer	Lbs	9500	7700	6500	5700
	Kgs	4300	3480	2940	2580
Cumulative Cable Capacity	Lbs	16	42	72	94
	Kgs	5	12	21	28

Line Pull & Cable Capacity

Line Pull	Lbs	No	2000	4000	6000	8000	9500
	Kgs	Lade	907	1814	2722	3629	4300
Line Speed	ft/min	27	15.8	11.7	9.36	7.7	7
	m/min	7.5	4.4	3.25	2.6	2.15	1.95
Motor Current	AMPS	70	145	210	280	350	415



Warn 9.5XP Factory Specs

Line Pull Lbs.(Kgs.)	Line Speed FT./min(M/min.)	Motor Current	Pull by layer layer/Lbs(Kgs.)
0	38(11.6)	70 amps	1/9500(4313)
2000(910)	16.8(5.1)	175 amps	2/8650(4927)
4000(1818)	12.8(3.9)	262 amps	3/7920 (3595)
6000(2720)	10.1(3.1)	335 amps	4/7400(3359)
8000(3630)	8.8(2.7)	425 amps	5/6940(3150)
9500(4310)	7.6(2.3)	480 amps	



Terrain Tamer 9500lb electric winch – installed in a GU Patrol with a 17 plate Yuasa Overlander battery.

Pull	Max Temp	Avg/Max Amps
1	29.0°C	120/182
2	36.2°C	150/173
3	46.0°C	155/200
4	56.0°C	175/222
5	66.5°C	180/248
30m completed in five 90second pulls		
Winch and batteries were given a 10minute (timed) break before the test was repeated.		
Pull	Max Temp	Avg/Max Amps
1	75°C	120/170
2	80°C	150/165
3	85°C	160/210
4	91°C	180/215
5	103°C	190/245
30m completed in five 90second pulls.		



Terrain Tamer is an Australian owned brand which has been involved in the 4WD Parts and Accessories industry for over 25 years.

We have established ourselves as one of the market leaders, not only locally in Australia but also internationally with our extensive range of parts, accessories and recovery gear to suit 4WD vehicles. Terrain Tamer aims for quality at a competitive price and has steadily expanded their range of products. It now offers a huge range which is constantly growing. Products currently include, Repair Kits, Suspension products, 4WD Recovery Gear, 4WD Accessories, Steering, Transmission, Filters, Driveline, Clutch & Brake, Engine Parts, Transfer Case, Fuel & Exhaust, Differential, Cooling & Electrical Parts. The Terrain Tamer reputation for quality has been strengthened over many years. Our formula for success is simple, 'We use only the best parts and keep our prices competitive'. For any workshop that repair 4WD Gearboxes, Transfer Cases, Diffs, Swivel Housings etc, this formula has been welcomed with open arms.

Terrain Tamer is committed to helping its customers by providing friendly and efficient service, with a priority towards quality and competitive pricing, as well as giving free advice relating to the 4WD industry.

We value every customer as a life long customer, and will do everything within our power to satisfy their needs.



www.terrintamer.com

ebay 9500lb electric winch – installed in an 80 series Landcruiser

Pull	Max Temp	Avg/Max Amps
1	30.5°C	130/155
2	36.3°C	170/245
3	42.5°C	150/180
4	51.5°C	180/225
5	57.0°C	Stalled/250

30m not completed due to winch stalling

Winch and batteries were given a 10minute (timed) break before the test was repeated.

Pull	Max Temp	Avg/Max Amps
1	56.0°C	150/180
2	63.0°C	160/220
3	70.0°C	160/190
4	73.0°C	170/190
5	75.0°C	180/230

30m completed in five 90second pulls.



Ironman 4x4 9500lb electric winch - installed in an 80series Landcruiser

Pull	Max Temp	Max Amps
1		119
2		149
3		160
4		170
5	40.0°C	180

30m completed in five 90second pulls

Winch and batteries were given a 10minute (timed) break before the test was repeated.

Pull	Max Temp	Max Amps
1		121
2		149
3		161
4		192
5	70.0°C	194

30m completed in five 90second pulls.



The Ironman Winches are LD9500 @RRP \$990 and LD12000 @ RRP \$1150.

These Ironman winches have been developed in partnership with our winch factory in China, which we visit regularly. We currently supply them to independent 4x4 shops in the Ironman box. We have been selling them for over 18months now. We carry a full range of spare parts and can service and fix them on site. We continue to improve and develop the winches, including having them fitted on the Ironman company 4wd and test them regularly. Ironman have also just released a range of winch bars to suit, offering a winch/bull bar combo for \$1950 + freight (LD9500 included in this deal). Also new to the Ironman range is a fully NATA tested recovery kit for \$295 (Includes - Snatch strap, winch extension, tree truck protector, drag chain, 2 x 4.7t bow shackles, snatch block, gloves and heavy duty bag)



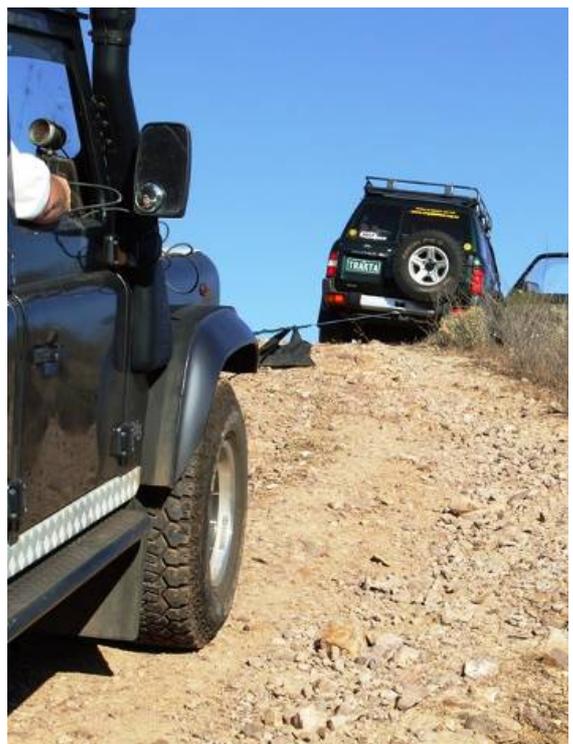
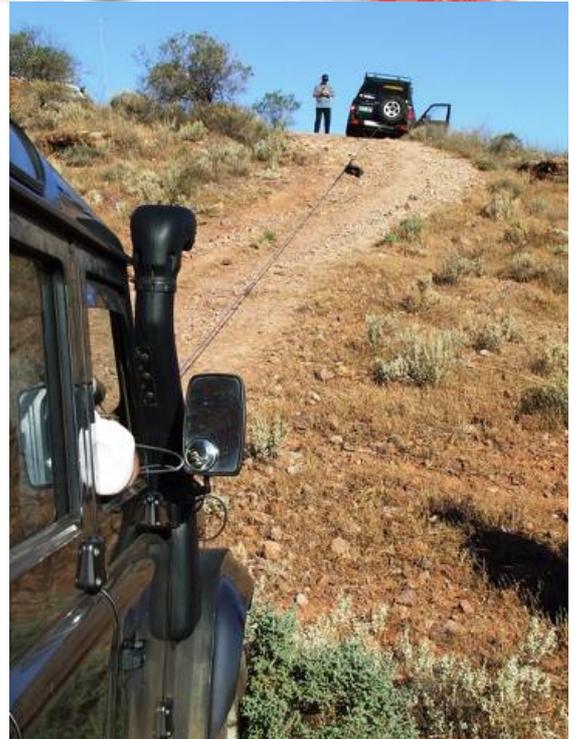
Ironman continues to develop new suspension upgrades for the 4wd market and the latest development is comfort ride springs and shocks for the dual cab market.

www.ironmansuspension.com



Warn 9.5XP 9500lb electric winch - installed in a 2001 Defender with an Exide Orbital battery

Pull	Max Temp	Avg/Max Amps
1		190/220
2		190/235
3		210/250
4	47°C	260/300
30m completed in four 90second pulls		
Winch and batteries were given a 10minute (timed) break before the test was repeated.		
Pull	Max Temp	Max Amps
1		214
2		235
3		289
4	50°C	345
30m completed in four 90second pulls.		



Winch Testing Part 2a

real world recovery exercise

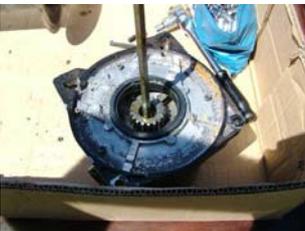
Now we are getting serious. A fully loaded 80 series Land-cruiser halfway up a steep loose hill with no way of going back as it has slid off the track. This is the sort of scenario that can happen on even the mildest of 4WD tracks and is exactly why a 4WDer wants a winch for occasional use. Due to the weight of the vehicle, the large loose rock and the steepness of the hill we elected to use a snatch block in this recovery.



First up was the Terrain Tamer winch. Parking the Patrol facing downhill was never going to work as the Patrol slid down the hill more than the Cruiser came up the hill. We backed the Patrol back up the hill onto level (but side sloped) ground and used 50m of winch extension straps to reach the Cruiser. The winch was making good, slow progress. After the third rest stop the winch wouldn't power in any more. It powered out OK so the motor was fine so obviously a solenoid in the control box had died. I was operating this winch and have to take responsibility for my ham fisted operation. I have now learned my lesson about the importance of regular stops to allow cooldown. The "recoveree" reckons I was on the power for at least 3 minutes each time. Chalk one up to experience, however we will rerun this test with a new solenoid to ensure that I was the problem!

We changed the webbing around and started using the ebay winch, fitted to the Toyota, to pull the Cruiser up the hill. The winch was pulling well, albeit slowly, and when we had pulled the vehicle up to the snatch block we stopped to remove one of the extension straps. It was while we were doing

this that we found the clutch wouldn't disengage. We also found a LOT of metal filings coming from the bottom of the gearbox. Oh dear. Not a good sign. We stopped the test there and consigned the ebay winch to the workshop for a strip down to find where the metal was coming from. Didn't look good for this winch unfortunately.



So what did we find when we opened up the ebay winch? The gears had tried to climb over each other (not surprising after our hardness testing) locked up and then sheared the retaining screws. The screw heads then did a very rough machining job on the drum end plate. The gears are wrecked and the drum is damaged. Can anyone think of a use for a hardly used 5.5HP electric motor?



RETEST: Terrain Tamer sent us a replacement solenoid for their winch and we retested it on the same hill. The winch was pulling so well using 30 seconds on 30 seconds off that we took the snatch block out and hauled the 80 series up the hill easily with a single line pull. Impressive! We will repeat this pull with the other winches later.



Requiem for a winch – RIP our \$400 ebay friend

So the cheapie is dead. Ripped itself apart. Very sad.

Did we go out of our way to try and kill this one? Hell no – we were bar-



racking for it to be a useful 4WDing tool that the occasional user would get value from. But it wasn't to be. When we first stripped it down before any of the testing started it was obvious that it was poorly assembled, barely lubed and had many examples of poor finish in critical areas. This became even more apparent when we disassembled the Terrain Tamer which had far better fit, finish and component quality. Sorry fella, we wanted you to do well but it just wasn't to be.

Early conclusions

So that's it for Part One of the winch testing. For the next edition we will be taking the winches swimming and then running them and, after a few weeks, we will be stripping them down again to check for corrosion and any wear and tear.

Early thoughts? The Warn is a quality winch but the corrosion in the end housing was a worry and so was the current draw. Its clearly the best built winch in this group though and if your usage can justify the price then go for it. The ebay winch was poorly constructed and suffered an early exit. The Terrain Tamer and the Ironman4x4 are of similar construction and quality and have both performed well. For reliability the Terrain Tamer has done a LOT more work than the others and has performed impressively (if you discount my cooking a solenoid).

We look forward to the next stage of testing.....

Have we missed anything?

Have you say on what you think of our tests and what else you would like us to do.

Drop me a line at:

fourwheelingsa@optusnet.com.au



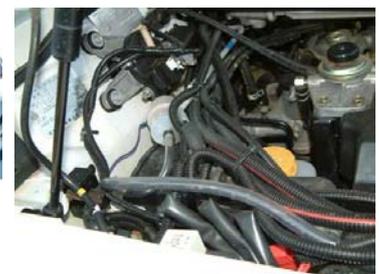
Adrian Szentessy—Warn 9500XP 6HP

I have a 9500XP winch. One of the new 6HP ones. I chose a Warn as I am involved with competition as a marshal and the Warn is the preferred winch by competitors. All other winches bar PTO types seem to fail or not have what it takes in the heat of battle.

It has been used in anger a couple of times on recovering others (incl. the Ateco winch challenge) as well as assisting me up a steep hill at the Vic. winch comp. for recovery duties. The assist up the hill was a full cable (I think 25m) + the 20m extension was used. This was done twice to get up the hill. I did drive with the winch going to keep the revs up to maintain charge but on the trickier section no drive was used. Didn't appear to be too much drain on the batts (wired up so as winching utilises both batts, the cranker being the main).

Mine is waterproofed via being sealed and a breather tube with filter. She has been dunked a few times now and is still in top working condition. The breather is the fuel filter on the firewall, the rocker switch on the dash near the dash dimmer is the in cab controller. This way I can drive/winch if required without the cable dangling or alternatively use

the controller which the controller box is also placed out of the way, under the bonnet. ProComp in Narre Warren were instrumental in creating the wiring, breathers and in cab controller.



Willem Kempen—Brawn 9500

A tad technically challenged when it comes to winches but I have had a BRAWN 9500 for three years now.

It was fitted to old Rosie the G60 and I did a few commercial winch jobs for people wanting to load cars on trailers. I then transferred it to the GQ but it was a tight fit on to the ARB winch bar which is designed to accommodate WARN winches only.

Last year my mate had a mega bog at Israelite Bay with his GU and the Brawn pulled him out without a glitch.

I run my BRAWN off the main battery, have the engine on fast idle when winching and have had no problems. These winches have had extra sealing against water ingress done to them after they had been imported. That is a particular failing I had experienced with 4 WARN winches over the years. They took in water and eventually rusted the gears inside.



Robin Miller—Brawn Winch - 2 years later

After 2 years of moderate use (about once per month), my winch stills works well and has given me the confidence to go 4wding further afield.

There are a couple of basic types, the lower end units have stamped gears and a rotating drum type clutch and better units have machine cut gears and lever operated clutch.

Originally I had the rotating drum type and it burnt out largely due to an experimental and uneven mounting plate used to mount the winch inside a standard GU Patrol plastic bumper bar.

My winch came from a company called Brawn (model ZR9500). It was the better type using cut gears, Brawn take these units and waterproof them with better grease and "O" ring seals.

To keep the weight down , and for safety reasons I replaced the wire rope with 8mm plasma and used an Aluminium hawse.

For reliability and ease of use by 1 person I mounted the winch control switches directly on the dash next to the steering wheel. I also mounted the solenoid pack high up next to the car battery, such that it would not get wet easily, and this required new leads to be made using 32mm sq copper cable (some standard leads are 25mm sq only).

I ran the winch directly off the main standard N70 battery with the engine running. Under heavy use this has proved marginal and some loss of battery water was noticed. This was corrected by changing over to a Exide Orbital 48AH battery. This spiral wound

unit has lower internal resistance and hence does not get as hot. The winch current consumption was checked using a clamp meter and meet its specifications.

The winch has got me out of some tough spots and has worked well and reliably.

It has one problem.

Sometimes the lever to operate the clutch appears stuck. This is because the internal gear teeth can sometimes aline directly opposite each other and will not mesh.

To correct this, the winch is operated for a split second, or rotated by pulling on the winch rope. Sometimes this takes 2 or 3 goes but always works.



POSTSCRIPT

After writing this report Robins' winch broke as follows: During a fairly routine winching exercise the winch motor mounting casting cracked through.

Pictures on the left show the damage.

Andrew Hiscock—Above and beyond the call of duty—TerrainTamer winch to the rescue

On the night when Haydn and I were stripping down the Magnum winch in his shed I received a phone call. A woman—a friend of a friend—had taken her Nissan Micra for some sightseeing on the salt flats at Eight Mile Creek just out of Whyalla. She was bogged to the chassis and had walked back to town to get help. Damsel in distress and all that so Haydn and I picked her up and headed out there in the Patrol. After about half an hour of searching we found the car on the far side of a large claypan. Believe it or not the Micra has a tow point that many 4WDs would be proud of—10mm round bar loop securely attached to the chassis. We hooked up the winch, including a 30m extension strap and cable damper, and winched the Micra sideways until the rear came around and we then winched it off the clay.

Damned handy these winches—for recovering other people!



DARLING RIVER RUN

Story and photos by Wayne P Dwyer

Day 1 Saturday 5/7/2003 Sydney to Dubbo

Left Sydney at 7 am 1 hour behind planned takeoff time
Breakfasted at Liverpool Maccas
Lunch at Wellington Maccas. Is there no escaping these places?
I was here about 15 years ago and Maccas wasn't even a possibility then.



Arrived at Dubbo at around 2:30 Stayed at the Big 4 Caravan Park near the Zoo. Nice park with security entry.

Met Roger, actually he found us setting up the camper still and we arranged to go to dinner at the Railway Bowling Club that evening

Roger and his mate Bruce picked us up at the Caravan Park and drove us to dinner where we met Mal and his young son. Mal's wife joined us later in the evening.



The food was a smorgasbord of seafood, Roasts, Chinese dishes, salads, fruit and deserts, It was an all-you-can-eat affair and I defy anyone to walk away hungry. Though David and Roger gave it a good try, they were soon full. Roger said that if it swam he would eat it, so the seafood was his main target. It was top-notch food as well.

We chatted about trips and 4Wding over a couple of ales and got to know each other a bit. It was a good night with fine company. After dinner Roger showed us where the local 4WD shops and accessories stores were then dropped us back to the Park and after saying our good-byes and with many

thanks, we prepared for tomorrow's visit to the Dubbo Zoo.

Day 2 Sunday 6/7/2003 The Western Plains Zoo

Up at 5:30, it was very cold. There was ice forming on the inside of the camper roof. Now that's coooold!!!!!!!!!!!!

Arrived at the zoo at about 6:15 for our breakfast with the animals.

A guide, Hugh, showed us around. He was a very entertaining chap, quick with one-liners and very knowledgeable. He led us through behind-the-scenes areas, explaining the methods of caring for the animals.

We saw a baby giraffe in the throes of being born, we moved on so the mother wouldn't be distressed. Later, another zoo staff member came over and told us that the giraffe had been born successfully at about 8:25. What a blast!!

After the tour we had breakfast in the cafeteria. Cereals, Juice, Coffee or Tea, Bacon and Eggs and toast were provided.

After the Zoo I shopped for food and last-minute items like tyre levers, a water jerry can and the like. We then went back to the zoo for a look at the animals in their daytime enclosures; the entry receipt is good for 28 days after purchase.

Before bed, we packed as much as we didn't immediately need into the car and camper so we could get away smoothly in the morning.

The aim of this trip is to:

See Dubbo Zoo,

Do Some of the Darling River Run from Bourke to Wilcannia

See White Cliffs

See Broken Hill.

Do More of the Darling River Run from Menindee back to Wilcannia if time permits

Head home on the tar via Cobar.

The crew:

Wayne (Me), David 14 (Son) and Anna 11 (Daughter).

Staying at Home:

Pat (Wife) stayed at home due to work commitments and anyway someone had to feed Maddie (the Dog), didn't they?

Before we left on this trip, there had been some trouble in Dubbo. I raised the question in a forum at the site www.exploroz.com where I am a member. After seeing my post there, another member Roger; a resident of Dubbo and a member of the local 4WD club there, asked me to email him my phone number. He then rang me and we arranged to meet up in Dubbo and go out to dinner.



Day 3 Monday 8/7/2003 Dubbo to Trilby

Up at around 6am. It was going to be a longish drive today to Bourke to get to our starting point. The point of the trip is to do the Darling River run from Bourke to Wilcannia, camping at Trilby Station for 2 days, near Louth. As they say "The best laid plans of mice and men..." anyway more about that later. We travelled from Dubbo through Narromine, Nyngan up to Bourke and the soil was getting redder.

On the way we stopped at a little town called Girilambone (girri-lamb-bone), to fill up at an Ampol Station. The owner is a great bloke who, once he knew where we were headed, suggested that I protect my rear windows from bouncing rocks that are kicked up by the rear tyres and rebound into the rear windscreen. I hadn't found the time to build a stone guard before I left home. He found



some cardboard that was the right size to do the job and made sure I knew what to do with it. He was a great help and I recommend that anyone that passes along that road calls in and fills up.

We arrived at Bourke after lunchtime and went looking for food. Found a nice pie shop that sold medal-winning pies. When we parked across the road from the shop, a local pulled up behind us and told me not to leave anything of value in plain sight. He was very critical of the behaviour of the locals and as he has lived in Bourke for quite a while, I took his advice. The pies were as good as advertised.

After lunch I fitted the cardboard onto the rear windows in preparation for the dirt then did some food shopping at the supermarket and saw some of

the local hoods in the car park. I didn't want to leave the car unattended so I locked the kids in the car and shopped as fast as I could.

After Shopping we headed out on the road to Louth, along the way as we were leaving Bourke we called in to see Fred Hollow's Grave. It is a nice memorial to one of our modern day heroes. We turned off the tar, onto the beginning of the Darling River Run. I aired the tyres down on the car and trailer, 24 fronts, 26 rears and 30 on the trailer.

Then we were off again. It didn't take long to see why the cardboard was necessary, I watched the paint disappear from the front corners of the trailer and toolbox and was glad to have met my friend from Girilambone.

Arriving at Louth, I filled up the tanks with diesel at \$1.20/L "ouch" it was only 89.9cpl when I left Sydney, paid at Shindy's pub and we proceeded



along the dirt road.

It was getting towards late afternoon by this stage but it was only 23km to Trilby so I wasn't too concerned. After about 49km I began to think something was wrong. It was getting dark and we hadn't seen a Trilby sign yet. I got the map out and had a look, DAMN!!! There is a bridge at Louth we were on the wrong side of the Darling and heading for Tilpa. I turned around and headed back toward Louth, cursing myself all the way. The kangaroos were getting very active by this stage, I had my shu-roo on and it was working pretty well on 9 out of 10 kangaroos, 5 out of 10 sheep and about 1 out of 10 cattle, who either totally ignored the noise or flinched in an unpredictable way at the last possible moment. This was, shall we say, an 'entertaining' drive all the way back to Louth.

Arriving at Shindy's pub again and feeling like a fool, I asked the way to Trilby Station. A couple of the drinkers were camping at the station so they said have a beer and follow us back there, so I did just that. I was told that I wasn't the first to miss the bridge over the river, it is in a tree-lined side street off the main road before the pub and I hadn't seen a sign mentioning it from that direction. Though, from the pub back there is a sign saying Trilby station this way. D'oh!!!

Arrived after full dark, at least it's not cold here, compared to Sydney or Dubbo. I found Liz Murray hostess and she guided me to a powered site where we did a quick set-up in the dark, minus the annexe for now, and settled in for the night.

There was a group of 36 Father/Son fishermen in a camp near the amenities block; the guys who showed us the way were part of that group. They were living it up and enjoying the camping scene there. There were dirt bikers, some 4wders and just campers, in all Liz told me she had 78 campers and guests that night. It had been a long day for our crew so we hit the hay, ready for a couple of days relaxing.

I still haven't seen the Darling yet. The road is not as close to it as the map makes it appear. I had crossed the bridge at Louth in the dark and in a cloud of dust from our guide's car so it is still a mystery to me.



and guests that night. It had been a long day for our



**Day 4 Tuesday, 8/7/2003 ...
And Then It Rained...**

Anna and I went to have our first look at the Darling River; it broke my heart to see an icon of our land, reduced to such a trickle. The shock gave way to awe as I looked at the massive banks and the huge old gum trees and imagined what it must be like when it is in full flow. It is easy to picture a paddle steamer negotiating the bends on its way to Bourke in the old days.

The whistling Kites flew and glided around searching for prey, there was even a couple of Pelicans cruising the river. The fish were stirring the surface a little, as they hunted too. The only noise was the sound of animals and wind in the trees, what a break for these city ears. The quiet was deafening and I felt myself relax as the day progressed. No time constraints or deadlines, no TV, no travel for 2 days all I have to do is chill out and feed the kids a few times a day. I could get used to this real fast.

We went back to the camper, to have some brekky and finish setting up. After brekky I met Gary Murray and had a chat about the do's and don'ts that we didn't have time for on arrival. He is a very friendly and helpful guy who doesn't mind a chat but Liz is the one who runs the accommodation. Gary is running a working sheep/cattle station and is usually to be seen taking off early with a bike and dogs in the back of his ute.



His dad flies the spotter plane and directs Gary to where the animals are hiding. Feral goats are the targets lately. We listen in on UHF channel 4 to the team. Found Liz and she provided a mud map of the station drive along with a book containing directions to, pictures and descriptions of what we are seeing. Great drive, we did around 40k's around paddocks, got lost a couple of times and I was later told by Gary that we hadn't seen one tenth of the property. They have 130,000 acres here and another property down the road; about 80km down the road.

After our drive, Liz gave the kids some Yabby nets to try their luck; we haven't done this before so they were keen to try. After about an hour or so, back they came with Yabbies in a bucket; most were of edible size so I boiled the Billy and in they went with a little salt. What a treat, they are better than prawns. I am going to have to get a net for the camper.

