



## The Yorkshire 4 x 4 Family Club

### Lothersdale 2020

After many months of lockdown, our newly formed Club got its first chance of the year to go and play at Lothersdale, a farmers field high above the Aire Valley, south of Skipton.

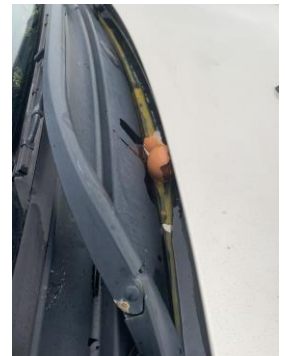
Lothersdale. It's always cold, windy, often either threatening to rain or raining and always overcast and today, on this mid August weekend, it continued the tradition. We arrived early, startled to find rather large cows and their calves gathered by the gate, balefully watching us edge our way through. They weren't for budging. We found a good look out point and waited for the rest of the gang.

They soon started to rock up. V8's, Discoverys, Defenders, a little Jimny and even a Toyota Hilux! There was about 14 vehicles plus owners, passengers and three dogs! We set up the gazebos and tables with a proliferation of hand gels, face masks and other precautionary stuff. The vehicles got scrutinised and there was a lot of catching up to do over steaming mugs of tea from a safe distance. A few went out to play while two courses were set up - one was an "egg and spoon" challenge and then second was a slalom course with a water section at the end. As it was the first time of doing these challenges, we all held our breath to see if they would prove popular.



Paul decided to go first, an egg in a bowl balanced on his bonnet as he gingerly wove in and out of strategically placed canes over the flattest bit of land we could find. He successfully completed the course as other participants watch on around the course. A line of various Land Rovers, the little Jimny and the Hilux awaited their turn. We started to time

people as they went round, passing opinions and comments and laughing when someone misjudged a cane. The egg and the bowl ended up on bumpers and roofs, the owners waiting for a drizzle of yellow down their windscreens. We were doing well - out of a box of 24 eggs we had only lost two. One on the ground, the other bizarrely nestling, broken and oozing in the base of a windscreen. We were averaging 45 seconds to over a minute in our times, until 20 year old Josh appeared with his Disco ready to impress. Hyped up, he only received derision and micky taking from his audience, gleefully waiting for the youngster to make a real mess of it. His fellow off roaders were soon silenced as he took to the course at speed, deftly negotiating the canes, taking the turns effortlessly and blew everyone out of the water with a time of 31 seconds, his egg intact. We all reluctantly acknowledged his achievement and left him before he became really unbearable.



We are like a big huge family, having known each other for years and welcoming newcomers like long lost friends. Sam had made Biscoff fudge and especially for Chris, cinder toffee. Its amazing how quickly we adapt to spacing in groups or bubbles whilst still maintaining banter, pulling each other legs, making jokes and teasing each other. John discovered one of his tyres had deflated and within minutes, James and Grumps had it jacked up and the tyre swapped. The little Jimny got stuck in mud and about 6 vehicles disappeared down the hill to rescue it. Nobody is left stranded, we all help each other, offering advice and information but with a lot of humour and friendship.

After a few more trips out over the field, deeply rutted by previous groups and enthusiasts, we tried the second challenge. Following a course around a crater full of water, you had to complete it without stopping, before dropping into the water itself and climbing out the other side. Again, a long line of vehicles queued. Shouts of encouragement, groans when it went wrong, laughter when it went



really wrong and wincing as metal scraped rock, it was fun to watch.

Everybody had a go, most completing the course. The little

Jimny made a valiant effort, though had to use the escape route out of the water. The Hilux Invincible, an impressive vehicle to look at, proved not to be so invincible as it had to reverse because of its huge turning circle and it couldn't make the other side of the water. Dan's excuse was that he didn't want to be unceremoniously parted with his sidesteps (yeah, yeah) and decided that it would be best to



remove them for our next outing.

Josh, still high on his egg and spoon success, appeared and again shot around the course. People were going around again, determined to make a better go of it. Josh joined in on this endeavour, but on his third trip, the course by now was deteriorating. The silt in the water had been badly disturbed and the banking opposite was muddy, slippery and disintegrating. The cars were struggling to get out, but Josh was determined. He tried three or four times to get his Discovery up the bank and over the lip, but fell back into the sludge. With the immortal cry of "just one more go" he sped up, his wheels spinning wildly, looking for grip when there was an ominous, loud clunk from the front of his vehicle and he slid unceremoniously into the pond, water sloshing around his stricken Disco, unable to move another inch.



Of course, we all laughed and threw unhelpful comments at him, like you do with a fellow off roader in distress, especially Josh. We couldn't help him at all, stuck in the middle of the goo, so he clambered out onto his door sill, his long lanky legs propelled him to the rear wheel and then he swung round onto the rear bumper to his tow bar, waiting for strops. A couple of his mates threw stones into the water to get him wet. Finally, when we stopped sniggering, we swung into action like a well trained military operation - ropes, strops, a Land Rover with a winch were called into service and he was hauled out in a matter of minutes. He had broken his diff. James offered to get his trailer and get him home, but as we all wandered off to have another cup of tea, we listened to Josh plead

for a new diff from one of us and if anybody would be willing to fit it. We all feigned deafness though James did go and got him roadworthy again the following day.



The weather didn't really improve and actually got worse, though that didn't stop us. Realising that the crater wasn't that deep in water, quite a few of us decided to drive the length of it, hoping not to stall. Then we tried the quarry, a steep sided pit which tested your mettle. Soon it was time to think about going home, so we all packed up, pulled down the gazebos, said our



goodbyes commenting what a great day it had been and when was the

next one! For the first outing for our little club and of the year and with the added complications of adhering to the rules around Covid 19 and practicing of social distancing it had been great success and the organisers were very pleased. Finally we towed Josh down to the main road to await recovery and headed off to our respective homes for a beer and a takeaway, though a couple of Land Rovers needed running repairs on the road. Now why doesn't that not surprise us?

