

"A Weekend Pass..."

The **Four Wheel Drive Club** has once again added to its growing list of hugely successful events with a fabulous trip to drive the spectacular Gatescarth Pass in the Lake District National Park. This time it was over a weekend with many members making long trips, some of 7 or 8 hours, to take advantage of such a limited opportunity to drive what is arguably one of the best green lanes in the country.

The club went all-out with the event organisation. Not only did they secure the last available permits for the pass for the year, but also arranged impressive 'digs' for three nights in a hilltop mansion with stunning views of the scenery just outside the village of Staveley.

Friday was spent travelling for much of the day up to the Lakes, followed by an evening settling in and relaxing before a somewhat early and chilly start on Saturday morning. Having met up with local guides for the day, Pete and Andy, from Big Beasts 4x4 Adventure Camping Club, two groups set off to explore what the Lake District had to offer for offroad excitement. And it didn't fail to deliver. The rocky, slippery terrain provided for plenty of entertainment and the dramatic scenery for some spectacular photo opportunities. Saturday evening was spent with a group barbecue back at the house with plenty of beer, wine and laughter into the early hours of Sunday morning.

The big day of the drive over Gatescarth dawned with great a great buzz of enthusiasm and anticipation in the house. It couldn't have been a better day to take on one of the country's most thrilling green lanes, with brilliant sunshine, clear blue skies and a crisp chill in the air to add to the nervous excitement that was building among everyone.

Two groups gathered at the start point to the North of the pass, the only thing in view being the narrow, rocky path winding its way deep into the hills. Alterastro (Nick) led group one through the opening gate shortly after 10.30am. The second group led by CupCake (Sadie) followed some 15 minutes behind. And boy what a drive it proved to be! With the sun low in the sky and the recent rain washing the surface rocks loose, it was an arduous challenge and a real test for even the most experienced offroad driver. Sheer drops, steep climb and slippery, surface provided thrills and excitement in abundance and the views from every aspect of the pass simply took your breath away. Gatescarth Pass promised to thrill and excite and it certainly delivered!

The fun didn't end there either. More challenges lay ahead from a run up Stile End, with yet more narrow, twisty and uneven climbs with little grip on the wet, slippery rocks. There was just enough time for a dusk run along Breasthigh Road before heading back to the house, jubilant and worn out from such a thrilling day's offroading. The evening provided for more socialising over dinner and drinks before the exhaustion took over and early nights were favoured by all.

The long drive home followed on Monday with the realisation that a fabulous weekend was all but over. It was a thoroughly enjoyable trip which no one thought could be repeated. But in true Four Wheel Drive Club style, a bigger and better event is planned for 2009, taking in a week at the Lakes with Gatescarth Pass South to North, more laning and additional activities on the cards. There are many more exciting events in the planning and if you want to be part of it then join us at <http://www.fourwheeldriveclub.com> and sign up for free!

