



Kevin and Karen Browne

Incident at Six Mile Creek

Exploring off-road in New Zealand's South Island, the Browne's much-modified Spada escapes a watery grave

It is a glorious day and the Molesworth is a fantastic track – a huge valley with dusty looking mountains in the distance and a crystal clear river in the bottom. The gravel is good allowing us to keep up quite a reasonable average speed and we become complacent. Round an uphill corner there are two large potholes; when we hit the first hole Kev didn't have enough momentum and bang down we go.

We are not hurt and nothing is broken but we are in a bad spot on a blind bend and the wrong side of the road and the bike has fallen downhill on its side. We quickly remove the down side pannier. On the inside face of each pannier we have a warning triangle which we made using reflective orange tape. It is the first time

we have needed to use them. I run up the hill and place the pannier to warn of danger. Oncoming traffic sorted, I return to help Kev right the bike using our leverage bars then after reattaching everything we are back on our way.

The rest of the route is a good challenge with some deeper gravel and undulating terrain. The scenery is spectacular; large gorges with clear rivers and mountain vistas. We arrive at Acheron house, an old cottage and camp ground – a lovely spot so we pitch up here although the sandflies are a pest.

In the morning we continue our journey to Lake Tennyson where we have a late lunch. I consult the map and from now on the track is marked for four wheel



drive only so we decide to put the outriggers on.

The road ramps up a gear with loose deep gravel and parts where it has fallen away into the river bed but the scenery is breathtaking; the outriggers do their job well and keep us on the road through the many stream crossings and land slips. We have nearly finished this marvelous ride and approach the last river crossing (Six-Mile Creek); it doesn't look that bad so I get off to film Kev coming across and he bundles into it.

This becomes a costly misjudgment as there are some large rocks under the water which bring the bike to an abrupt halt. Trying to ride out results in the back wheel just digging in and pushing the stones away and sinking into the silty bottom. The exhausts are completely underwater and the bike sounds like an outboard.

We would pull it out with the winch but there is nothing in the direction we need to go to attach to, even with our extension rope. We try to ride through soaking me in the process as I try to push from behind. We shed all unnecessary weight, removing the panniers. The wheel appears to turn and I am now drenched. We continue until we are about halfway across at which point I spied some old metal struts concreted in that the winch rope might reach.

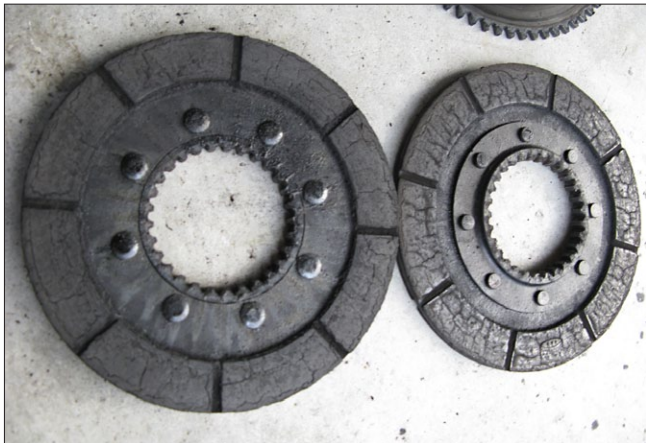
We then discover a deeper problem – in our haste we have been burning out our clutch. Alarmed by the smell



Alison doesn't even raise an eyebrow when the frame is removed from the engine and the whole lot resembles a very dirty jigsaw puzzle. Just to add insult to injury we realise we have left the rope and strapping still tied to the concrete post in the river – cue more swearing.

As I suspected the clutch is well and truly cooked. It stinks and is black and burnt but the metal parts are all good so all that's required is new plates.

I ring the ever helpful Pete at Moto Kiwi that night to order some new ones. He says there are two different types of splines, one shallow and one deep. He only has the newer modified deep spline plates on the shelf but we are all fairly convinced this is what we need so we go ahead and order them. I put new plates in it when I rebuilt it a couple of years ago but there was no mention then of any variation and it all fitted. We all retire for dinner and I spend the next day cleaning everything up as the parts will not be here until the day after. Karen uses the day to catch up with some urgent clothes repairs, drying out the boots etc. and computer work.



Kev looks down to see black smoke pouring out of the clutch housing. We eventually drag her out of the river with the winch and bolt and strap everything back on but we have a hill to climb and the clutch is slipping like mad; we can ride on the flat OK but under load, on hills, we are losing drive.

I consult the map again and when we set off for Murray's it is about 6pm. We are still not on the main road and are almost thwarted by one hill as Kev struggles to keep the momentum going. By the time we get to Blenheim it is already past 9pm. It's been a fantastic couple of days and we have seen some amazing country that most tourists never witness. It's a shame it ended like it did as up to that point we were doing really well. What did we learn from it? Buy another 30m of rope!

Thankfully, when we explain our dilemma Murray and Alison take pity on us and say it's fine to stay and fix it there. Murray knows what's involved as he has done it himself but we explain to Alison that it's a big job and it will take a few days.



At 10.00am next day the courier is here and I eagerly unwrap the new parts and offer them up only to find out that ours was the shallow spline version. Drat – more phone calls to Pete. It will take some time to get the other clutch in or we could replace the input boss on the gearbox with the modified deep groove one to get around the problem. It means yet more money but it's the best solution we can come up with. Our original boss is a bit worn and the newer version is deeper to give it more mating area to reduce wear.

Pete manages to get it ready before the courier departs so it will be here tomorrow, pretty impressive service considering it's coming from Waiheke Island right at the top of the North Island. He also sends all of the stuff out first and trusts us to pay the money into his account once it arrives – what a top man!

The reporter for the local newspaper pops in for an interview. We explain the bike is in pieces and the reporter takes some pictures of us next to the pile of bits as well as using some images from our website. It's a good interview and at the end he asks when we think it will be back together?

"Should be done by tomorrow," I say. He can't believe it, and says "it looks like it will never all go back together."



Elaine Bay

Next day, as good as his word, the input boss is here. It's held on by a pegged nut which in theory requires a special socket but I manage to grind an old punch to fit which works really well. Once the gearbox, lower frame rails and centre stand are back it's time to put the top half of the frame back on. Everyone one helps for this bit as there is a lot to line up and a bit of jiggling involved but soon after she is back on her wheels with just a few bits to finish off.

We pack up our gear and say a huge thank you to Murray and Alison. We have a plan for the next few weeks and a fixed bike to do it on thanks to them. We managed to do all the work with the tool kit on the bike (which pleased me) save grinding the punch but it made it so much easier being out of the weather and having somewhere to stay, not to mention being fed and looked after with tea and sympathy by Alison. Marlborough Sounds and the West Coast await and we are rolling again Wooohoooo!



We are headed for an area called Marlborough Sounds at the top of South Island – nice and remote. We stop at a DOC (Department of Conservation) campground at Pelorous Bridge which is fairly busy and after a good chicken stir fry for dinner the caretaker comes over with her torch and asks who wants to see the glow worms. Assembled on the bank of the waterfall (which is magnificent in torch light) we all douse our lights and are treated to glow worm partytime, a rare treat indeed.

Tent down the next day we set off for Marlborough Sound. We have about 50km of tarseal road up twisty mountains weaving all around the hills before we drop into Okiwi bay. It is remote out here and we do the remaining 20km on gravel to the end at French Pass.



We arrive and pitch up then take a walk along the beach. The tide has just turned and we find starfish and jellyfish washed up. The starfish we throw back in the sea, the jellyfish look like glass on the beach. Although a usually peaceful spot here, we are sharing the village with thirty-odd kids on an excursion who are chatting excitedly in a house on the hill a way away. It looks like an earplug night tonight might be the way to go.

We sleep well oblivious to the partying thanks to our lug plugs – definitely a good move. We are making our way back towards Elaine Bay to camp today as we have had a good look around here. The road in was the main reason we came as it offers amazing views deep into the sounds. Just before we enter the tree line we see a good

picnic spot, a better view we could not have from both sides of the table.

Elaine Bay is not the best ground for tents, rutted and muddy, but I strike lucky and spy a path that leads to a perfect tipi sized clearing, flat grass with a view worth millions and even a table and our own private beach access. We just have to get the bike up the tiny path which we accomplish with no problems.

Walking along the wharf we spy loads of fish, large and small along with huge starfish and itty biddy ones.

We sit outside our 'penthouse' enjoying the sun setting and I think of my mum – it's her birthday today/tomorrow at home but I can't text as we are too remote for phone signals.



Welcome to the following new members:

Guy Russell	Australia	Neil Alker	Lancashire
Lorcan Greene	Eire	Mr. T. Summers	Lincolnshire
Paul Connatty	Qatar	Nigel Baddeley	Lincolnshire
Ian McLean	Aberdeenshire	Ian Brett	Lincolnshire
Linda Brown	Bedfordshire	Lucian Evans	London
Charlie & Karen Carr	Bedfordshire	Jeremy Harness	London
Clive Roberts & Alison Gibbs	Berkshire	Peter Reynolds	London
Martin Evans	Berkshire	Oliver Tomlinson	London
Nick Deavin	Berkshire	Byron Lewis	London
Robert & Lilian Nairn	Borders	Mark Palmer	London
Dougal Stewart	Borders	Richard White	London
Kenneth Harvey	Borders	Said Bijary	London
John & Fiona Boasman	Buckinghamshire	Kenneth McAllister	London
Robert Conquest	Cambridgeshire	Garry Samett	London
Will Male	Cambridgeshire	David Hallam	Merseyside
Douglas Robertson	Cambridgeshire	Dave Cashen	Merseyside
Bryan Stephens	Carmarthenshire	Timothy Brown	Merseyside
Jeremy Boulton	Cheshire	Anthony Parsons	North Yorkshire
Kevin Ward	Co Durham	Craig McGarvey	North Yorkshire
Nick Atkinson	Co Durham	Stephen Baker	North Yorkshire
Eugene Darragh	Co Down	Keith Willis	Nottinghamshire
Dylan Lane	Convy	Ian Thomson	Oxfordshire
David Gaskell	Denbighshire	Paul & Rachel Adams	Oxfordshire
Andrea Brown	Devon	Stuart Brooks	Perthshire
Roger Gibbons	Devon	Marcus Hickman	Powys
Pierpaolo Fracasso	Dorset	Nicholas Martin	Somerset
Robert Healey	Dorset	David Vallis	Somerset
Martyn Ashwood	Dorset	Gary Gleeson	Somerset
David Sambora & Kim McKenzie	East Sussex	David Davies	South Yorkshire
Graham West & Gina Craske	Essex	Andrew Burnside	South Yorkshire
John Coull	Fife	Trevor Latter	Suffolk
Paul Williams	Gloucestershire	Chris Beacon	Surrey
Adam Davies	Hampshire	Michael Lee	Surrey
David Hammond	Hampshire	Tony Allsopp & Sarah Green	West Midlands
David Sayce	Hampshire	Richard Greenwood	West Yorkshire
Tony & Kim Butler	Herefordshire	Hope Taylor	West Yorkshire
Lester Malony	Hertfordshire	Raymond Bradley	West Yorkshire
Andrew Court	Kent	Robyn Howard-Evans	Wiltshire
Alan Griffin	Kent	Paul Ysart	Wiltshire
Andrew Donnelly	Lancashire	Graeme Bishopp	Worcestershire
		Edward Crossley	Yorkshire

Please contact your local Branch organiser/rep to find out how to get the most out of being a member of the club. If you are thinking of visiting a meeting place, phone the contact to make sure that there will be someone there to welcome you.