



NEWSLETTER

MEETING – 19-20-21/6 at Wilpena

Unfortunately a number of our members were unable to attend this weekend due to the changed date and their prior arrangements. Nevertheless, Vince and Helen, Peter, Athol and Tony braved the beautiful June weather and the astounding scenery, now clothed in bright green, thanks to some very useful and welcome rain in recent weeks, to set up camp for the weekend in the Shearers' Quarters. As usual dinner was a happy affair with Athol's liqueur replacing Julie's cheeses and other goodies. It is sad that more of the Friends cannot be at Wilpena or Oraparinna to share and enjoy these splendid evenings together. Even the short but valuable discussion after the meal was quite enjoyable. So was the early night and a warm bed!

Saturday arrived heralded by blue sky, early, and our cars were covered with ice. By 9.00am we had set out in two vehicles for Guide Hut, about 50 kms away. En route we charted road junctions, checked distances from Wilpena and took photographs for the data base.

Helen continues the Saturday Saga –“ The Guide Hut looked beautiful as we drove towards it over the dirt track in between masses of trees, bushes, kangaroos and creeks. The sun was shining on the roof, directing our attention to the new task we had planned for the day. For a couple of years we have been reconstructing an old pug and pine shepherds' hut, once part of the Oraparinna pastoral property. The new pine walls have stood now for over a year, the windows and roof for many months but now it was time to set the tank on its new stone stand and start pugging the walls. For a few months there had been talk among the group about how we would approach the task. Someone reported that we needed horse hair to fill in the gaps between the pine posts so that the pug could cling to it. Problem! Where are all the horses out there? Others suggested we collect soil from here and there as the main material in the pug. Fortunately Steven Jennings, the Park's Construction and Maintenance Officer, who is as keenly interested in Guide Hut as the rest of us, had the answers and with his experience made a start on the pugging using sand, lime and colouring.” Only after he, Athol and Vince had put the tank in place! One should mention too that Vince and Peter had had to drive in and out of the Park at lunchtime to various places to find suitable bits of down-pipe and fittings so the tank could collect rain from the rapidly approaching storms.



Tony and Athol watch Steven making final checks on the positioning of the tank on the stand that Steven had built last month.

Helen continues –“ While the tank action was underway, Helen, Athol and Tony cut strips of chicken wire and folded them ready for them to be pushed into the gaps between the logs. This was done with Steven then very carefully stapling or nailing the wire in place. He and Athol then mixed the pug and Steven started what is evidently going to be a long and tedious job. There are a lot of posts to be pugged in this hut! We ran out of colouring before we ran out of time. About 3 metres of wall were pugged in the afternoon and the result was fantastic. When it is all pugged I am sure it will be the pride of the north end of the Park. In the meantime there is still plenty of chicken wire to cut up, spaces to be filled and pug to be mixed and applied, so there is enough for all members to give it a try over the next Friends’ weekends!

As is usual our time on the job is not entirely work. We all enjoyed smoko in the sun and then lunch in the shelter of the hut when the wind sprang up. A wonderful day overall.”



Steven starts the long job of pugging the four walls of Guide Hut

“Enough said”

What Helen did not say was that from late morning storm clouds began to appear rapidly from the west and the north and we all felt that we would be packing up rather rapidly and heading for Wilpena or at least the safety of the new Wilpena to Blinman bitumen road. However, much of it passed by without dropping in so to speak for which we were very grateful. We all reached Wilpena dry and mostly mud free.

After our usual BBQ we were educated and entertained by Athol who showed a magnificent DVD from the Astronomical Society on galaxies and stars as seen from the Hubble Space Telescope. Wow! One of our members sadly missed some of it due to the comfort of the chair he was sitting in. Nevertheless the evening was very enjoyable.

After expectations of a savage night weatherwise we awoke to witness the dawn of a perfect day. Well, some did! Sure the cars were iced over but that soon retired leaving us with no option but to return to Guide Hut for more pugging. Helen and Peter cut wire, Tony and Vince pushed it in place in the wall, as did Steven and Athol pugged away to his heart’s content. Once the wire was used up Helen helped Peter and Tony shift the last of the wood heap by the car park thus leaving the area at the front and along the southern side perfectly clean and free of “builders mess”. After cleaning up the equipment and materials, a leisurely lunch inside the hut was followed by a pleasant drive back to Oraparinna via the short cut (c.13 kms) which winds through beautiful hill and valley country liberally dotted with kangaroos. Once back on the bitumen we headed north for Trezona. Helen suggests – ‘ What a great way to get to know our Park better. Driving and walking to various features throughout the Park to collect information for our data base took over our programme as soon as we ran out of pug at Guide Hut. It is surprising how much information can be collected by a few people in a reasonably short time. Fortunately we had the advantage this time of having a list prepared by Tony of the key features we were to visit, photograph, describe and grid reference. Among the places we visited during the afternoon were Emma Smith’s Grave, Dedman’s hut, bore, gorge and stockyards, Trezona camp ground and the nearby Golden Spike. We also examined the tree planting and watering system, with tank, mentioned in the last newsletter. What made each of these sites more interesting were Tony’s stories about what had happened in these places so many years ago.”

VHS REVIEW:

Our work in the Park has brought us face to face with many of the forces in Nature that have shaped the Park over millions of years - and continue to do so. Perhaps they appear somewhat abstract when seen in the context of rock strata lying quietly across the Park. Perhaps it would help our understanding and appreciation if we could see these forces at work in the contemporary world. Try the following video from your local library.

“Natural Wonders of Europe – Fire and Ice” (Readers Digest, 1995)

This video takes the viewer by way of magnificent photography, much of it from the air, over the volcanic areas of Iceland and Italy-Sicily, showing dramatically how the landscape is still evolving often through devastating eruptions such as on Heimey in Iceland, Surtsey which rose up out of the Atlantic in a matter of weeks and of course, Vesuvius and Etna amongst others in southern Europe. The thermal areas of Iceland are also included, demonstrating the impact of boiling water on a largely ice covered environment.

The ice sheets and glaciers of Iceland are then contrasted with the fiords of Norway and the areas of Finland once under an ice sheet – continental glaciation – leaving drumlins, lakes and moraines all over the countryside. (TB)

Stop Press:

*Tony has represented our Friends Group at two meetings earlier this month, both concerning the future of tracks and trails in SA but, for us, more importantly, those in the Flinders Ranges National Park. He will report on these during the July weekend.

* Peter had a nasty experience on the way to the June weekend. An emu tried to join him in the car just north of the Willochra Creek bridge. A broken windscreen, numerous dents and a shocked driver were the major results. Oh, and a dead emu! Peter was able to drive home to Melrose where he was encouraged by wife, Margot, and the Monterolas to go to Wilpena anyway, Vince and Helen providing the transport. He was glad that they had made that decision for him as he did have a great weekend regardless of what could have been a more serious outcome on Friday.

* Margaret and Frank, Helen and Vince, Marge and Ron are still away on holidays

* Jan and Jamie have been attending an Aboriginal Language School in Quorn and Wilpena in June while Athol has been delighting visitors to the Ranges to the wonders and mysteries of the night sky through his telescope – clouds permitting!

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