



friends of the flinders ranges national park

May / June 2009

www.friendsofflindersranges.org.au

MEETING – 15-17 May at Wilpena

By dinner time on Friday, May 15, Peter, Julie, Vince, Helen, Marge, Ron and Tony had settled into the Wilpena Shearers Quarters ready for a convivial meal followed by a very positive round table discussion on issues of immediate interest to the Friends – water supply to newly planted trees in the Park, Guide Hut reconstruction, Parks data base project, Friends' website, Appealinna and the varieties of cheeses thoughtfully provided by Julie.

At 9.00am on Saturday Ron and Marge moved their operation to the garden at the Wilpena Homestead where they had the fruit trees to care for, weeds to remove, tree guards to repair and frost covers to put in place where appropriate. All of this under the watchful, if not friendly, eyes of the local kangaroos and beautiful ring-neck parrots who share the garden with us humans.

Meanwhile the rest of us drove out to Trezona campground to begin the next task. Vince takes up the story – "It was great to get out into the Park and do something about a fairly barren campground. Despite the huge and beautiful trees that grace the creek line that runs along the northern side of the campground much of the ground on the southern side is dry, eroded old lake surface on which little of any consequence grows. This takes away from the beauty of the gums. Parks staff is again doing something to address the problem. As previously, this year there are 500 seedlings being planted around the Park, mainly in areas where visitors of the future will benefit from the shade and beauty of mature trees. Experience has shown that these seedlings need help to become established, few managing to survive a long hot summer without water. So our morning was spent assisting Parks maintenance officer, Steven to lay out a watering system in readiness for 50 or so trees to be planted at Trezona early in June.

This really is a great team effort, our Rangers have sourced the trees, men and women for the Toyota Landcruiser Club are planting them and we Friends will see to it that they are given every chance to become established over the next few years and so transform this barren area.

There may be millions of trees in the Park now but there can never be too many."

At lunchtime District Ranger Darren, Tammy and children arrived to inspect our handiwork and then join us in the afternoon data base information collection. We all drove along the old stage coach track to Elatina, the site of the eating house-coach house in the 1860s –1890s. Of great interest was the huge mulberry tree with its green/yellow foliage and no fruit! Surprisingly there was still water in rock holes in this part of the creek but, disappointingly for the children, no frogs. Information was collected, photos taken and the cavalcade continued on to join the Bunyeroo track near Yanyanna stopping at the 'great fault' where Vince and the Crawford mountain goat family scrambled up the steep slope along the fault line to the top of the ridge. Julie and Tony examined the fault line half way up the slope!

Back at Wilpena we all enjoyed a barbecue tea and then sat around a roaring fire where we were joined by Steven and Terri and their son who also helped entertain the seemingly inexhaustible Beth and Declan Crawford. I believe we all slept well that night.

Sunday saw Ron and Marge back in the garden and the rest of us on the Blinman road to Enorama Creek. Frank and Tony had stumbled on to rock bars in the creek some years ago but had not seen them since. We all walked, except for Peter who looked after the cars, for what seemed many kilometres and eventually found the big waterfall on a different creek, also called Enorama. Great excitement filled the air as we found a track leading right to the Falls and from there back to the main road. As Vince had thoughtfully gone back to his car he was able to drive to the Falls from where Helen took Tony back to get his car. We then lunched in comfort by the Falls. One more natural feature for the data base.

After lunch we drove the few kilometres to Youngoona and there examined the eating house ruins, the stromatolite strata in the creek, the gorge and the water hole, once magnificent but now dry. This may sound easy but it did involve walking along the creek for about two hours. More data base information.

Ron and Marge had finished their work and had left early but not until they had done a magnificent job in the garden. The Ranger staff said they had never seen it looking so good. Well done Ron and Marge!! Their report is as follows – “ The Orchard: Sad to say but the Mandarin has passed away. The newly planted Apricot tree, when we arrived on Friday, was on the critical list. It is now out of intensive care and doing fine. Both trees were suffering from the lack of water.

All trees in the orchard have been de-weeded, watered, fertilized and pruned. The Grapefruit tree, badly affected by the frosts last year has still not regained all the foliage burnt off and is lop-sided. On the other hand the Orange tree, so decimated by frost and roos, has fully recovered well. The Lisbon lemon sustained no frost damage at all. There was no fruit produced from the citrus this year except for the Lemon which managed about half a dozen egg sized lemons. The citrus trees have had skirts wrapped around the cages up to about 1.4m high and also caps on top of the cages to help keep the frost out. Some tourists think they look cute while another wit suggested we consider electric blankets!

We were grateful for the help of a middle aged man and his wife, Queenslanders, who helped us lift an extra large cage up and over the star dropper posts. When the cage was high in the air it seemed so heavy and wobbled around. It even threatened, heaven forbid, to encage Marge! Later the same couple returned to help put it back. There are some very nice people around.

In the Garden – General: Apple and Nectarine trees all produced a useful and tasty crop for the first time this year and was appreciated and enjoyed by the Ranger staff.

The Irises are doing well, and like all good Irises, multiplying. The Madonna Lily is looking healthy and the Crocuses provided a great display of brilliant yellow blooms around the garden. A real asset. The Lilac has had a real battle to survive. It is in a poor position, it's been eaten, dried out, broken, accidentally pulled out and now has no leaves. We think it might have given up the ghost! (Do plants have ghosts? Ed.) The Hyacinths have not as yet popped their heads out. Are they shy, lack water or been eaten by invaders? The Violets which came originally from Brian Powell's place at Endilloe, Quorn, seem well suited to the area. We are pleased to note that we haven't noticed any losses from among the Roses. The variety is pleasing to the eye but the bugs have spoiled the blooms. They need regular spraying. Horehound is a pain. It needs spraying as well as the roots removed. White ants have been an ongoing problem. We are now minus the Hawthorne tree and another unnamed tree near the main entrance to the Homestead. Lost last year was the very old Apricot tree next to the hydrant. The other old and ant ridden Apricot tree in the orchard has shot out a brave sturdy new shoot which just might end up replacing the existing tree.

Personally, as a member of a small team of volunteers, I don't think we have a chance in hell of maintaining a predominantly English type garden as it was 45 years ago at Wilpena. It requires 12 months of TLC, not the 8 months we as a group can put in. And who wants to work on 40 degree days in summer?

I have been coming to this area since the early 1950s and have noted the following:

- The hot days are generally hotter over a greater number of days.
- We seem to have more frosts with one or two quite unusually cold ones thrown in. (This is borne out by the types of flowers and trees that were grown here earlier.)
- The seasons are getting out of kilter.
- I have never seen Wilpena so very dry over such a long period.
- I have never heard of the spring at Aroona ceasing to run.
- I have never seen so many gum trees dying.
- I have never seen kangaroos in such large numbers so desperate that they strip bark from trees.

Ron and Marge hard at work with the trees in the Wilpena Homestead Garden



Thanks Ron and Marge for this most informative report.

A Request:

Vince asks of Members – “When are you coming up? Have you thought lately when you might come up to the Flinders for a weekend and enjoy working on a project with us? Now that we are mainly using Oraparinna as our base, and the bitumen road now goes almost to the front door, there is room for more members to spend the weekend. And there are always plenty of projects and plenty of time to enjoy being in the Ranges. The dates of the remaining weekends are shown elsewhere in this newsletter. Decide which dates suit you and then let the President, Tony Bott, know and he will reserve accommodation for you.

We realise that some people simply can not make it up to the Flinders for a weekend so we are planning some projects around a full week up there. Once dates for the Oraparinna Shearers' Quarters are confirmed we will publish them on the website and in the newsletter. Hope you might be able to share the fun at one of them.”

Friends' Weekend Meeting – June 19 to 22 at Wilpena. (Yes the date has been changed back)

Programme: Friday – Arrive and share evening meal

Saturday - 9.00am Travel to Guide Hut and spend the day pugging the walls at Steven's instructions. Return to Wilpena before “roo time”. Dinner and no meeting.

Sunday – As for Saturday unless rain has washed out the road.

Alternative programme – Data base preparation and collection of data at Etina, Yanyanna, Aroona, the old coach road, Cadby's, Sacred Canyon area.

Other dates: - please note any changes:

July – 17-20 at Wilpena; working at Guide Hut/Appealinna stone wall.

BOOK REVIEW:

Enjoy a literary challenge? I recommend the following as essential reading about our Australian environment:

BACK from the BRINK; How Australia's landscape can be saved. and

BEYOND the BRINK: both by Peter Andrews, ABC Books, 2006-8

From his own experience as a farmer in S.A. and N.S.W. and research into rural problems around the country, Peter outlines succinctly and in layman terms how “the delicate balance between land and climate has been disrupted by human settlement” and how “the country is on the brink of irreparable ecological destruction.” With problems of salinity, drought, erosion, falling crop yields, inadequate water supplies, the loss of bio-diversity and so on, “he concludes that we need to return the landscape to its original systems.” Book II suggests how we might save the environment, if we choose to do so. These are must read ideas and practices if we want our children and grandchildren to have somewhere to live in the not too distant future. (TB)

STOP PRESS:

** The Friends were asked if we could fund a 5000L poly-water tank for Trezona to supply the pipelines we laid in May. The meeting of 16/5 voted to buy the tank, Ray, Julie and Tony made phone calls, Julie delivered the cheque to ***One Stop Water Shop*** in Port Pirie and Steven and Chook picked up the tank from Port Pirie and delivered it to Trezona. All in a week! We did promise to give the new trees a chance at survival!

** Julie and Tony drove to Blinman last week to deliver some of the Blinman books and found to their delight that there were only about 9 kilometres of dirt road left to be sealed. During the day it is now a delightful drive, even at 60kph.

** Helen and Vince, Terry and Trevor have recently returned from a driving tour in south-western and central W.A. where they visited lots of conservation and national parks and had a great time.

** Margaret and Frank have just left for Europe to cruise the Baltic, visit Paris then Scotland, England, Wales and finally Ireland, returning at the end of July. Bon voyage.

** Tony represented us recently at a meeting of the Presidents of the Northern Parks Friends Groups at D.E.H. and was able to report very favourably about our various activities in the F.R.N.P. and our relations with Ranger staff at Wilpena.

**Marge and Ron are going on the Ghan to Darwin and will miss two Friends' weekends. Have a great holiday.



Knick-point in Enorama Creek –
another record for our Data
Base.

CONTACTS

President:
Tony Bott
triciab@adam.com.au

Vice President:
Vince Monterola
vhmon@bigpond.com

Secretary:
Helen Monterola
vhmon@bigpond.com

Treasurer:
Tricia Bott
triciab@adam.com.au
PO Box 2032 South Plympton
5038

Liaison Ranger:
Nicola Beaton
beaton.nicola@saugov.sa.gov.au