



friends of the flinders ranges national park

October, November 2009

www.friendsofflindersranges.org.au

NEWSLETTER

October 16 – 19 at Oraparinna

The peace of Oraparinna was shattered on Friday afternoon as first, Margaret and Frank drove in followed by Marge and Ron and then Helen and Barry, who had just driven, with their caravan, all the way from Queensland. Finally, Athol appeared towing his trailer carrying the doors for Guide Hut and a lounge kindly donated by Margo and Peter in Melrose. Thanks folks, it is so much more comfortable than the old three seater which has been on the verandah there for, dare I say, decades! Tony had arrived earlier. After last month's anxieties, this time the weather was perfect so we were able to sit out on the patio having drinks and nibbles while being entertained by Helen (Qld) who told us all about the Gold Coast and Brisbane, the hotels, shopping centres, buses, trains, the football et al. It was just so exciting that we all felt that we wanted to be up there right there and then!

Then Saturday came unannounced and Athol, with Barry, who has been following the Guide Hut saga through the newsletters and was keen to see it, drove out there at 9.00am and spent the day hanging two doors and getting them right! The rest of the group drove back to Wilpena where we worked in the homestead garden until near lunch time – with one break for morning tea in the Shearers' Quarters. It was then that Julie caught up with us and we were glad to see her. Marge weeded around some of the bushes that really needed it while Margaret, Julie, Ron and Tony worked on wire covers over some of the trees which needed protection from kangaroos and the larger birds. We then went off to Sacred Canyon, 15 kms from Wilpena, where we had lunch in the shade of the trees along the creek. It was a beautiful spot made even better with the walk along the creek to the Canyon where we searched for the Aboriginal art in the form of intaglio engravings. The sighting of numerous wild hop bushes in flower amid their more politically correct native hop bushes, also in flower, was an extra bonus. In all this excitement we were set upon by Helen (SA) and Vince, Terrie and Trevor, who had followed the instructions in the newsletter and caught up with us after having spent the week at Gum Creek with the Toyota 4WD Club, chasing wheel cactus infestations. After a short break we all went off along the road back to Wilpena searching for old shepherds' huts and wells along with an ochre quarry. We were lucky in that Tony remembered the rough locations of some of the ruins and Frank's mud map may have helped. We found, described and photographed two wells, a hut and the quarry. To do that we had to walk over scree slopes which were hard on the feet to say nothing of the distances we tramped and the heights we had to climb. The quarry was probably the last straw for most of us so we drove back to the bitumen and along to the Jones' Camp track to check out the Salvation Jane patches which we had seen out there last month. While there were some dense masses of purple under stands of trees, the big area away to the west of the lead mines was disappointingly devoid of colour, the plants perhaps having closed up for the weekend!!

Back at Oraparinna we were quickly into the cheeses, biscuits and drinks – Julie was here at last! Thanks Julie. Helen (Qld) had stayed in the caravan all day as she has difficulties with walking let alone clambering over rough terrain. Join the club! Nevertheless she had the energy to share more instalments of the south Queensland saga before we had our BBQ followed by our short business meeting. By this time we had been joined by Di and James who have been unable to be with us for a year or more. Welcome back! The meeting dealt with book sales – thanks to Trevor for selling so many of the Tour Guides; the possibilities of reprinting them as A5 booklets and places to sell them – they are currently available at Teague's in Hawker; certificates of membership, data base expectations et al.

Sunday morning Athol, Barry, Di and James drove out to Guide Hut to complete the three door project while the rest of the group, including Frank who had returned safely from a day at the Blinman races, and now accompanied by our Liaison Ranger, Nicola, headed off to the Old Blinman Road (now an emergency track only between the Bunyeroo Track and the main Blinman Road) . In the early days it had been a mail-coach road, bridle and wagon track from Wilpena to Oraparinna, and perhaps even on to Blinman. While the track winds over rounded rough hills covered with Spinifex in places, it also boasts, on odd hilltops, stands of Yakkas, and, in valleys, extensive clumps of Mallee and the silent pine posts that once carried the telephone lines that provided some communication from the outside world to an area which still seems remote from the rest of humanity. The only signs of human activity are the fenced excisions where tests on the impact of rabbits and kangaroos on the native vegetation in opened sections are compared with the completely closed off areas where no animal can venture. In at least two of these the

differences were outstanding with bare stony ground alongside areas of almost complete ground cover made up of a variety of grasses and weeds. While we did not see any rabbits along this track there were dozens of red kangaroos. Morning tea was served in our favourite 'car park' at a creek crossing on the Bunyeroo Track where there is room for a number of vehicles, off the road, and easy access to the gorge about 200 metres along the creek. We then searched along the Track to find remnants of the old coach road only to find that a grader had widened the road and destroyed the stone pavement which had been easy to follow a year or two ago. Even the stone culvert which Tony had photographed some years ago has been largely washed away, leaving only a nearby section of stone retaining wall remaining reasonably intact.

We then drove off the road to the quarry from whence came the dreaded yellow clay which the road builders had attempted, three times, to use on the new Blinman road, with disastrous results after rain. That was not our destination however, rather just somewhere flat to park. We set out to follow the original track made by Hayward and Boord as they took their wagon-loads of wool from Aroona and Oraparinna south to Port Augusta in the early 1860s. Despite the treacherous nature of the steep gully down which they seemed to have gone (according to Hayward's reminiscences) there are some signs still of rocks gouged smooth by wheels and a stone embankment built near the bottom of the "track" just above where they apparently crossed the creek. The way was rough, and still is, the way back to the cars a thorough test of legs, heart, lungs and determination. We all made it without the need for the defibrillator or first aid kit! Di and James were waiting for us at the vehicles. By this time it was surely lunch-time so we headed to Yanyanna Hut a short distance away. There the table and seats were in summer sun so we sat in the shade, ate our lunch and were privileged to be entertained by a beautiful Red-Capped Robin which flitted around above our heads. Di and James made off to return to Adelaide, Di still being a working lady and James a student. It was not long before they returned because James, a learner driver, was keen to join us on the Elatina track which along with the Guide Hut track, would be great learner driver experiences. And so we all arrived at Elatina, the old coach station – eating house on the Wilpena to Blinman road, 1866 to 1896 (?) Unfortunately it is now in ruins except for the amazing mulberry tree which looks more like an orchard in Elatina Creek, where, would you believe there is still water in rocky pools! Our main reason for being there was to find the Elatina copper mine which required Vince, Frank and Nicola to drive about the countryside and climb hills here and there, getting worn out and not finding the mine anyway. Bit like the lead-mine search of previous months! However we did record the stone retaining wall along section of the road not far from Elatina, along with the cutting on the opposite side of the road, in addition to a grave a little distance northeast of the road – yet another of the "great unknown" who lie buried in unmarked graves across the North. The trip back to Oraparinna was uneventful but quite pleasant along the new bitumen main road although the Geological Trail, still dirt, had been rutted by vehicles in wet weather. By this time pre-dinner snacks were enjoyed prior to a shared tea. Athol and Barry had returned from Guide Hut with their "dooring" complete. Thankyou Athol for a great job of cutting the timber, making the doors, transporting and then hanging them and Barry for your support and assistance over the week-end. And James for his efforts at oiling the doors. It was unfortunate that during the day Terrie and Trevor had to pack up early and head for home as Terrie was suffering from toothache which required immediate attention. We have since heard that she had the tooth out on Tuesday but then had a problem with subsequent bleeding. We hope she is fully recovered by now. Marge and Ron had to leave early too as they had to be in Leigh Creek next day for Ron to carry out his duties checking weights and measures.

The next day for the remainder meant cleaning packing returning via Quorn for quandong pie and coffee. While others returned to Adelaide Tony went via Port Augusta to collect the last load from his son's sold and vacated house. He and Tricia thank the Friends for their understanding, concern and support through these nine months of house-sitting, 'house-opens' and packing.

November weekend – 27th-30th: Oraparinna

(* *Note Change from the usual third weekend.)

Programme:

- Friday pm. Arrive at Oraparinna and join in the nibbles and drinks on the patio, weather permitting.
Dinner followed by work on the pastoral heritage section of the data base, addition of photographs and other information to hand. Frank and Peter to explain the workings of the computer programme involved where necessary.
- Saturday am. 9.00. collection of data on the Oraparinna precinct; Early lunch at Oraparinna;
pm. Dedman's precinct to complete data on the various sites; then to Youngoona for the

same purpose.

7.00 pm. Christmas break-up dinner at Oraparinna provided by the Park's staff.

8.30pm. review of data base programme on computer with comments by Ian or Darren (?)

Sunday 9.00am. Drive to Aroona – complete data collection en route –Trezona, Lubra

Waters Hayward's first hut etc. Lunch at Aroona.

pm. To Brachina and relaxing time with the yellow feet?, fault lines et al.

Return to Oraparinna, write or type descriptions, details; Shared dinner after nibbles and drinks.

Monday am. Clean out the Quarters, return materials to Wilpena where necessary and drive sedately to Quorn/Hawker for morning tea – venue by mutual agreement

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No weekend meetings in December or January; Annual General Meeting third Saturday evening in February – venue to be advised in December newsletter.



Sacred Canyon - Some of the Friends group looking for Aboriginal Art Saturday afternoon