



friends of the flinders ranges national park

September October, 2009

www.friendsofflindersranges.org.au

NEWSLETTER

MEETING – 18,19,20 September at Oraparinna

Once again Friday witnessed the journeys of up to 500 kms by members of the Friends Group as we headed for Oraparinna. By happy hour and then tea time Julie and Peter M. Frank, Tony, Helen and Vince, Marge and Ron and a 'wee' bit later, Florence and Dean, had all settled in to an evening of good food, great nibbles, (thankyou again Julie), splendid wines and jovial company. Athol and family were staying at Wilpena to run the 'night life' for the Spring Events.

Amongst the topics for animated discussion during the evening were the water in Boolcunda, Wirreanda and Kanyaka Creeks with patches of the sacred stuff along the roads in many places. This was all the result of substantial rains during that week. Worthy of comment too was the work being done on the new bitumen road to Blinman, especially the many safety rails being erected around possibly dangerous bends along with the accompanying signage. It all gives the impression to motorists that it is not safe or wise to speed, cut corners et al on this road – along with the 60kmh speed limit! None of this gave much fore-warning of the events of Saturday and Sunday!

Saturday morning was overcast and threatening to rain as it was decided to follow the programme for the day with one group driving out to Guide Hut, with the Park's staff, the others to drive out to the old homestead at Etina to collect all the information for the Data Base. When the rain started the Park's staff suggested we wait for the afternoon before attempting any of the dirt roads. Despite the itchy feet of some of the group who wanted to do something, anything but sit in the lounge at Oraparinna counting rain drops, we did wait for lunch and then headed back towards Wilpena, on the bitumen, leaving its comparative safety for the unknown state of the Cadby track. It was a relief to find a mainly dry track to where we believed the lead mines were located, and accessible hillsides with their panoramic views of the Pound to climb over. And yes, Frank did manage to lead us to one of the mines with its neatly timbered shaft. The information noted we drove on to Cadby's place through the most magnificent bush and hilly landscape much of it ready to be clothed in the Salvation Jane purple which has been missing from those parts for the last few years. Thanks must be tendered to Vince who twice took down a shovel from his vehicle and doctored creek crossings/gullies to allow access to those with less clearance. Safely at the end of the track we were then able to walk along the gorge (Cadby Gorge?) which is one of the most spectacular sights in the Park. Apparently the Cadby brothers thought so too because in the 1850s-60s they built a number of small cottages with stone chimneys in the area along with four or five brush and, later, railing fenced sheep yards. On our return to Oraparinna we found Athol and 'chicks' comfortably relaxing in the lounge smiling at their success at, earlier in the day, finding another of the lead mines. We All thought that we had had a magnificent day despite the dampener in the morning. To see rain up there is superb anyway, any time! A BBQ tea was a fitting end to the day, along with a good night's sleep!

Sunday morning was bright so half the group headed for Etina, the other half, in Ron and Tony's cars, drove off into the east, following the Park's vehicle. Greg had also come down from Blinman to join in the pugging 'frenzy'. There were patches of mud and water along the 18km track but no real dramas so it was with relief that we arrived at Guide Hut in good time. That is meant advisably because ten minutes later we were engulfed in a massively savage thunder storm which covered the landscape roundabout with water in a matter of minutes. The hail helped. The 18km. track suddenly took on a different appearance. Once nature finished having its fun we were able to mix the pug and settle down to either wire more of the inside wall or pug what was already prepared. Meanwhile the water outside disappeared and the sun shone from a blue sky, well that is until another storm added a little more to the ground. To say that the anxiety levels were rising by the minute would be an under statement so that it was decided to have lunch at Oraparinna having used all the mixed up pug and all of the usable wire. Steve and our liason ranger, Nicola, having done their bit with wire and pug had to leave to do their rounds of the Park which gave us even greater reason for getting off the 18km track as soon as possible. This decision was hastened by the arrival of yet another huge storm in the NW, thankfully still low on the horizon. Before he left it was great to see Steve and Tony load up the Park's vehicle with all the pine offcuts that had been

heaped up near the chimney causing a hazard for people walking past or pushing wheelbarrows, a possible home for undesirable creatures and giving people the idea that they could use the wood to light a fire in or near Guide Hut. It's gone now!

The drive back to Oraparinna was one of anxiety mingled with terror of some sort. As we left Guide Hut the storm in the NW was starting to come closer. The road was not too bad except for one muddy stretch which gripped the tyres but failed to hang on! We managed to drive around a number of bad bits. No creek was flowing and we were lucky enough to arrive at Oraparinna at the same time as the storm. It actually bi-passed us but when the other group got back some hours later we found that they had not been so lucky except that they were on the bitumen by this time. They were fearful for our safety as we were of theirs and later heard that the Park's staff were anxious about our return from Guide Hut. But we were all safe and the countryside got another good drenching. The Friends decided to celebrate an early afternoon with a 'happy two hour'! Unfortunately Helen and Vince, Marge and Ron and Greg had to leave towards evening to return south, or north in Greg's case. Athol had taken his family back to Wilpena to prepare for the 'night life' starting on Monday.

Monday started bright and sunny but soon the clouds gathered while the remaining six of us cleaned up the quarters and packed our gear. Tony had to go back to Wilpena to drop off equipment at Ranger HQ and to watch three storms in different directions vying for degrees of savagery. They all passed by and so did we until we arrived at Hawker to have coffee in the Panorama Book Shop – well, Julie, Peter and Tony anyway. By about 1pm Tony reached the western hills above Stirling North to find that someone had stolen the place, Port Augusta too. Yes, it was the big dust storm, not red but yellowy-brown. By the time Frank drove down to Hawker later the dust had arrived there too. It is one of the wonders of the Commonwealth that in this case Sydney wanted to claim ownership of the dust storm and of all the hardships that went with it but gave no credence to the fact that it had passed through Port Augusta on the Monday and then across a couple of thousand kilometres of Australia before it reached Sydney.

So passed an interesting and different Friends' weekend in the Flinders Ranges.

Programme for Friends' Weekend, October 16-17-18-19 at Oraparinna.

Friday: Arrive for tea followed by discussion time.

Saturday: 9.00am Return to Wilpena to check out the state of the garden; clean up and make repairs.

12.00 pm Drive along Sacred Canyon Road to lunch site then check out Aboriginal and pastoral heritage sites. 4.30pm – return to Oraparinna; shared BBQ.

Sunday: 9.00am Drive to Bunyeroo track and check out all access, geological and pastoral heritage sites between the old coach road and Elatina. Lunch at Yanyanna (?)

Monday: 9.00am Clean up quarters, return to Hawker/Quorn for morning tea.

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per family subscription for this year–

Feb.2009 to Jan.2010?