

# Grey Gypsies on the move again!

Autumn in the Flinders Ranges – May-April 2011

Seeing the Flinders Ranges as an emerald green oasis really appealed to us so we set off to combine three trips in a busy fortnight.



Firstly Bruce Gooday organized the GGs plus Alan and Vicky Davis to go to the Blaze Aid camp at Charlton for the weekend to help local farmers repair flood damaged fences. While the boys worked fencing, Vicky and Meg mopped floors and prepared meals in the kitchen at the local footy club where we were based. All workers are volunteers and somehow one of them takes charge to organize the work gangs and another to do the paperwork needed to keep funds rolling in. Communal evening meals were catered for by local ladies and the volunteers of all ages exchanged

many interesting life stories and had lots of fun after their day's work. Alan and Vicky stayed on for the following week at Blaze Aid while Bruce returned home and the GGs headed for South Australia to meet with Meg's Probus group.

Very few trips are trouble free; in fact the problems are often a great part of a trip. So it was for us. About 10km out of Charlton Terry noticed a trail of liquid following us on the road when we pulled up. It certainly explained the high fuel usage! The suppliers of the new canopy on the Navara had pulled the breather hose off the fuel line. After a few phone calls we drove back to Seymour to the Nissan garage who fixed it and had us on our way again. 300 km after leaving Charlton that morning we were almost back to where we started and spent the night at the pleasant Wedderburn caravan park.

The next two nights we camped at Rosy Pine Soak, a camp in the Ngarkat NP on the SA border. This Mallee scrub park is usually empty with some good walks to lookouts and wildflowers. We caught up the next night with the Probus group at Clare and had a great group BBQ round the huge open log fireplace at the caravan park, followed the next day by a trip to Burra and Mintaro, two quaint towns with lots of coffee shops, old wares dealers and eateries!



Our real destination was Rawnsley Bluff caravan park near Wilpena Pound in the southern Flinders Ranges where we met up with Peter Carlyon [Mazda] and Chris & David Jackson [Disco!!!]. While the Probus group drove the easier Elder Range trail, we drove Skytrek on Willow Springs station. What a great but long day we had! The track initially follows several gullies with canyons, huts, creeks, Aboriginal rock art and wild flowers. Lots of photos and a morning tea stop! About half way through the track turns and climbs onto the Bunkers Range where we were treated to some nice climbs, tight corners and fabulous views over the valleys from many look outs with eagles soaring round us on the windy ridges.



A nice lunch stop with tables and seats gave us room to spread our lunch and bring out a glass of wine. We also did the trail to the Skull Rock, an optional extra on the way out. It took over an hour and the track was rougher than SkyTrek! It was a great day for drivers and passengers alike.



We farewelled the Probus group next day and the Wang group set out for Chambers Gorge in the North Flinders. Did I say we had a Disco with us? Hmm. David's on board computer got precious and kept dropping the clearance down and insisting on travelling in 2WD. After a number of stops and suggestions [eg Why did you buy this car?] we turned back to Wilpena Pound to get phone reception and possible help for the cranky disco. After some discussion with Dave's mechanic the boys disconnected the two batteries, waited and then reconnected them in an effort to restart the computer. Sadly, this strategy also failed so we waved goodbye to Chris and David and two cars set out again for Chambers Gorge. [PS David and Chris had an uneventful and pleasant trip back to the NE - the disco happily doing 2WD]



Great drive into Chambers Gorge where recent rain had filled the creek and waterholes. To our surprise we found three cars camping in the gorge already and bumped into the campers on a number of our walks the next day. A huge display of rock art is found after a short walk to the end of the gorge suggesting this was a very important ceremony site for the Aboriginal people who formerly lived here.



Two nights later we were on our way to Lake Frome [has it filled with water? Answer: No] and then to Grindells hut, a 22km 4x4 drive off the main road on our way to Arkaroola. We had intended to drive the Stirrup Iron Range track at Mulga View station on our way, but the owners had closed it temporarily due to recent rain and were waiting for the grader to arrive the following week to re-establish parts of it. Grindells track was a nice challenge pulling our camper trailer [it was closed by the



ranger the day after we left!] and the Illinawortina Pound Circuit track out of Grindells was also closed when we arrived, due to the recent rain! It seemed all the great driving was closed and the grader was always coming “next Monday”! We left Grindells after a one night stay and shepherded a hired Subaru out as its driver was doubtful if he could get out again through a big mud hole on the creek. He cleared it in fine style after taking a running surge at it and bouncing off a few rocks in the middle!

On to Arkaroola! Yes you guessed it! They had closed their 4x4 tracks due to the recent rain, and yes! the grader was arriving Monday. All was not lost however as their 2WD drives were now 4x4, so we drove those instead. The Stubbs waterhole drive led past old mining ruins, some spectacular views across Welcome Pound, gorges and a waterhole great for swimming. Likewise the next day the drive to Bolla Bolana Springs and an old mining site along a creek bed was also fine. Our only complaint was we picked up two unwelcome travelers while at the Arkaroola camp site - two mice that crept up into the lockers on the camper trailer. They liked multigrain bread! We got rid of one before leaving the camp site and offloaded the other in Laura on our way home.

Many thanks to Pete Carlyon and the Jacksons who were great travelling companions on the Flinders trail.

Meg & Terry Dillon

