

# NSW NATIONAL PARKS TRIP

5 – 18 October 2009

The trip composed of two vehicles, Terry (Leader) and Meg DILLON (2.5L D22 Navara and Jayco Eagle Camper) and Rob & Anne BUCHAN (3.0L D22 Navara with Kimberly Kamper).

We met at Cobram and headed off, after the obligatory espresso coffee, towards MUNGO NATIONAL PARK, north of Mildura, via Deniliquin and Balranald. After about 550 + kilometres we arrived at the main camp ground which, being NSW school holidays, was reasonably full. Another couple, from Torquay, staying there happened to be going for a walk and recognized my voice. I know Ed through contract work he has done at the Alpine MDF factory at North Wangaratta – you can't escape can you.

The next day we took the road around the lake (The lake was full 40,000 years ago and we walked amongst the weathered formations where Aboriginal artefacts were evident.) Looked at the named sights and the old and newer shearing sheds - it amazes me how these properties, now National Parks, once supported 50,000 sheep.



We decided to go up to Mungo Lodge, a private venture on the edge of the NP, for a look. Managed by a French couple the 5 STAR rated accommodation & restaurant was for the well-heeled. The large espresso machine was welcome. A FIFO (fly-in-fly-out) holiday if you want one. Left the old lakebeds and headed to the Darling River, lunch at the POONCARIE coffee shop, owned by a kiwi who engaged in some friendly banter. He preferred it to Christchurch. We were advise to cross the Darling and take the left hand track, as it was better. After a long time and eating much of the leaders dust we choose a camp on the Darling River below MENINDEE.

There were some well sheltered numbered sites but being well covered by the dreaded red gums we chose to camp past the last site under lesser gums – attractive water view. The lakeside sites, no water, appeared exposed from a distance. Not far away was a government crew building a weir to retain some water.

The Menindee lakes are all dry, the outback oasis passed by Burke and Wills is doing it tough. Being good leaders B & W slept at the MENINDEE pub (which we forgot to see along with the blazed tree – reason to go back?)

Time to head north again to MOOTWINGEE N.P, about 150 kms past Broken Hill. It was easy travelling to Broken Hill on dirt and bitumen roads. It was around here, still following Terry & Meg, I noticed a narrow strip in front. Turned out the water tank fill/drain fitting on the Dillons' camper had suffered and it was the water tank contents that marked the road.

Terry went to the REECE plumbing shop in Broken Hill and got a few fittings for later repair. After another coffee/chocolate/milkshake we departed Broken Hill, on the wonderfully named Silver City Highway that heads to TIBOOBURRA.

About 70 kms along the bitumen we turned right to MOOTWINGEE N.P., another 70 kms. Soon sighting a vehicle with bonnet up by the side of the road did a U-turn. He was only pumping up his tyres. Handled the bumps better with less pressure he said. We thought he had a touch of the sun as the road, gravel, was



smooth – shortly it rivalled the road to BLANCHE CUP (just off the Oodnadata Track) – had to push the fillings back in.



Arrived at MOOTWINGEE, \$10-00 camp fee, and \$7-00 day car fee unless you buy the N.P. Pass which we did (Went to the N.P. office at Broken Hill – the only person who could work the till was at lunch – a long lunch). Bought an Annual Pass for all areas, except the Sydney area and Kosciusko N.P. Showers were available at the camp – solar heated.

We stayed three nights, Terry had arranged for a tag-along tour with TRI-STATE SAFARIS. The vehicle arrived with some passengers ex-B.H. about 11 am and off we all went to the historic area now only accessible if you are with a ranger or “approved person”. We were taken to see some markings under a overhang

– not very impressive to those who want to see quality aboriginal art work. After crossing the valley to a gully we were taken to see some well-executed and very impressive “pecked” impressions of animals etc. We could have spent a day here if allowed.

The Buchans and Dillons had earlier walked up Homestead Creek where, if you are prepared to scramble around, you can find some fine handprints and the odd “pecked” work – the creek had some deep waterholes off to one side but I doubt they will last the summer – once assumed to be permanent.

A sign said they removed 7000 goats in 2007. I believe them; walking up MOOTWINGEE Gorge you almost had to push them aside to get through. Some fine specimens if you are goat fancier. They fetch \$15 a head at Port Pirie someone said.

The Gorge walk was my highlight in this area. A circular waterhole about 15 meters across with meter wide gorge beyond that. Panoramic camera needed here. Almost came to grief here as it is easier climbing up than down – didn’t fancy a dunk in the very green water.

There was a lot of bird life. Apostle birds, Mallee Ring-Neck Parrots and Major Mitchell Cockatoos. The Apostle birds were very friendly.

The repair to the Dillon’s camper water tank did not hold and with the road condition some of the rivets on the camper door gave way – red dust intrusion.

We decided to return to the highway and go to STURT N.P via Packsaddle rather than possibly suffer more on the White Cliffs road. After backtracking we hit the highway and the on again, off again bitumen.

Fuelled at Packsaddle (\$1-59 litre) and fed ourselves. I was here in 1983 and a Cobb & Co. coach would have seen no changes since the gold rush days. Progress? The place has turned into a truckie/tourist stop – lost some atmosphere but the beer was cold, fuel reasonable and food good.

Arrived at TIBOOBURRA, the capital of N.W. New South Wales via MILPARINKA, old courthouse & pub remain from the gold rush days. Surprised to learn that Depot Glen, 13 kms away, where Captain Sturts’ men camped during the summer of 1842 (?) was dry. It was full and an oasis 2 years ago when we camped here on another club trip.

Stocking up at TIBOOBURRA we decided to head to Mt.Wood Station Campground, about 25 kms out. N.P.W.S. The brochure said there was quiet secluded campsite. It was surrounded by gibber stones and the trees that gave it seclusion were long dead – there were new plantings and these were watered by timed automatic sprinklers!! There were the usual toilets and free gas BBQs and hotplate. (used a bit of gas and the sand jammed the controls on). This was to discourage the use of wood – a scare resource up here. The old station homestead across the road was now a N.P. Ranger residence and workshop.





The sign in the shearing shed said 16,000 sheep were shorn at the last shearing circa. 1975. Hard to believe now. Walking back from the shearing shed aboriginal stone tool sites was evident amongst the gibbers. The kangaroos around the area were feeding on Lucerne hay and during the 100 km gorge drive the western red kangaroos were common. Before going on the gorge drive we had to sit out the widespread dust storm. On heading south next day the two vehicles travelled over 300 kms to Broken Hill through a dust storm virtually all the way. Willi-Willis were sighted on every side. Another break at Packsaddle gave some respite.

At Broken Hill we stayed at the first caravan park – better in the bush – if going to Broken Hill check where you stay.

Whilst Terry and Meg went to find a caravan dealer to do some repairs Anne and I met the iconic Aussie Jack ABSALOM at his gallery where we purchased a few books and prints and imposed on him to sign them. Jack still wears the khaki outfit and Akubra and in his 70s still goes out painting. He is a passionate supporter of Broken Hill.

Terry & I visited the old Mt. Wood Homestead looking for some tools to fix the door on their camper as the corrugations had stressed the door hinge rivets.



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Leaving Terry & Meg to head home we headed to Mount Gambier to visit some old friends. From north of Naracoorte to the Mount it drizzled and rained and water was so plentiful the lagoons were full and paddocks flooded. At the Mount it rained for 3 days – nothing has changed.

Australia certainly is a land of contrasts.

Rob