



Whyalla (30 Sep – 3 Oct 2016)

OCTOBER LONG WEEKEND 206 WEEKEND IN WHYALLA

Saturday 1 October (Darke Peak)

Saturday 1st October. Our trip to Darke Peak Range left at 8am leaving from the showgrounds. Our group consisted of 6 vehicles including members from the Whyalla club, Mt. Lofty Ranges club (Anne & Malcolm & guide dog Alby; Trevor & Lyn) & the Gawler & Districts 4wd Club.

Whyalla was originally identified as Hummocks Hill and named by Matthew Flinders in March 1802. There are 1-2 ships exporting the iron ore out of Whyalla every week.

Our trip leader (navigator) for the day was Wayne accompanied by Zuzzane (driver) and her 3 children. We headed towards Cowell, driving past the Middleback Ranges in the distance. This area is cut into an iron-based mine, which produces hematite and magnetite. These ores are exported overseas to China.

The ore is also processed in Whyalla and made into high beams for structural steel and to build railway lines. Our first stop was at an historic icon, a tin shack where Cobb & Co passed by on their many travels through outback Australia. Eagleridge and Middlecamp Ranges were also viewed on our scenic drive to Cowell. We arrived at the historic township of Cowell, and had a quick look (while a few purchased some fresh Cowell Bay oysters.)



We then drove along the Birdseye Highway where we stopped to look at the memorial to the renowned children's author, May Gibb MBE. She spent part of her childhood in this area around the 1800's and influenced many books with her famous "gumnut babies." She was born in 1877 and died in 1969. We then continued on towards Cleve, home of the Eyre Peninsula Field Days, also noticing the lush crops in this area. 35 wind farms are also situated on Mt Millar on the way to Cleve.

We now travelled on to Darke Peake, our destination. Darke Peak is a remarkable table-topped picturesque 10 km range. Darke was a surveyor in this area. He was tragically speared to death by aboriginals in 1844. His grave is situated in a hollow in the most northern peak. We started heading up the track, taking in the magnificent views, then stopping at some water tanks that supply reticulated water to Cowell and other towns close by. We slowly started ascending towards the peak, the track was quite challenging and rocky in areas. We took in the spectacular scenery with colourful patches of wildflowers along our drive. Our group made it up to the highest point of the peak without any dramas with the vehicles. The descent was quite rough at times, with intermittent loose rocks. We made it to a clearing at the bottom of the peak, with a refreshing waterhole, a great lunch spot! The children (as well as some adults) were kept entertained by skimming stones across the water. There were also goats in the distance, and they would probably access this as their watering hole. We spotted a few kangaroos and emus trip hiding amongst the trees and in the flatter areas. We then drove on towards the town of Darke Peak, there is still an operating pub in the town, otherwise it's quite desolate.



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We made our way back towards the highway, coming across a large granite rock, a landmark named Carrabee Rock. We took a secondary road named Dog fence Road back to the highway. The roads were quite wet and slippery at times. A few puddles around (a good opportunity to get some mud on the 4WD.)

Crops in this area are also very lush, the farmers are expecting a bumper harvest!!

Our last stop was at Moonabie H.S. (historic landmark,) a tin shed, where the Cobb & Co. Coach, on their explorations, stayed overnight. It took one day to drive the coach from Whyalla and another day to get to Cowell. Many dates of people stopping here are scratched on the shed (some dated back the 1a to the 1800's.)

A good day was had by everyone. Special thanks to Wayne from the Whyalla club (who gave us loads of information along the way) and Zuzzane who led the trip.

[Bronwyn & Roy]

Saturday 1 October (Middleback Ranges)

Saturday: Peter Harper, Martin, Joann & Peter, Pauline and I and a few others set out for Middleback Ranges and Bronwyn & Roy headed for Dark Peake.

The Middleback Ranges lie 35 kms SW of Whyalla. Travelling 35 kms down the Lincoln Highway and about 15 kms on dirt roads and tracks, we arrived at the property and found the gate locked. We did have permission to enter the property so not sure why the gate was locked. Anyway, we were able to dismantle the gate and continue on for Cooks North, which is the highest peak (448 meters) in the North Middleback Range.

We went along winding bush tracks as well as



experiencing a loose rocky climb. From the top

we had a great view overlooking the Iron Chieftain Mine to Spencer Gulf to the south east and Middleback Lakes to the north west. There was a small brass plate at the top of Cooks North which read "HMAS Moresby 1928." HMAS Moresby was a survey ship and must have been in the area in 1928 surveying the Spencer Gulf.

From there we headed to another property where we found the gate was also locked so we decided to carry on to Iron Knob and we took the rail service track back to Whyalla. Just before Whyalla a few of us drove to Wild Dog Hill in the Whyalla Conservation Park where we listened to the last 10 minutes of the AFL Grand Final.





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Sunday 2 October

On Sunday, Bronwyn & Roy joined us to Corunna 6 kms north of Iron Knob where we entered the Corunna Station. The lease was taken up in 1861 and a French family acquired the property in 1977. In 2005 they took the Federal Government to court after the Government tried to evict the family from the property. The Government wanted to take the property and give it to the Bungala Aboriginal Group as compensation for the land they (the Federal Government) had taken for the Army's Cultana Training area. The family spent \$100,000 fighting the acquisition and won in 2013 only to have the Government appeal in the High Court. The Government later withdrew the appeal.

The tracks on the property visit scenic vantage points and the original water supply dam for Iron Knob. From Corunna Hill we had great views over Iron Knob. Just below Corunna Hill there is a narrow valley where we found a small man made dam built by Matthew Flinders in 1802 to collect water to replenish supplies on the ship "Investigator."

On Monday we went to the Mt Laura Circuit just at the back of Whyalla. A very challenging 4WD circuit that included many hill climbs with loose rocky tracks, steep inclines and descents. It was supposed to take 2 hours and finished up taking 3.5 hours.

On getting back to camp, we packed up and headed home.

[Bob & Pauline]

