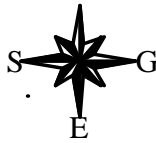


September 2007



# SEGMENTS

Journal of the Scientific Expedition Group



## Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges Scientific Project Annual Report for 2006/2007 *Written by Chris Wright*

The Gammon Ranges project has continued successfully for the past 12 months. The major task has been to replace the last of the SDS Loggers with the modified Davill loggers, which use the Bureau of Meteorology RRD-3 loggers, plus a long-life battery.

Trips have been as follows:

### *December 06*

Graham Blair and Chris Wright made a quick trip from 22-24 December. The planned trip in November had been cancelled due to illness of some of the group, therefore, there was an urgent need to exchange data loggers that had not been serviced since July. Graham and Chris managed to service all loggers in 2 days (including a walk of just over 30km through the ranges with full packs), just before the onset of some heavy summer rains. The stream gauge loggers had been interfered with and some equipment stolen. Graham managed to repair and modify the loggers so that one complete set is functioning, until we are able to upgrade the whole system. A small amount of data was lost due to flat batteries on the logger at one site.

### *February 06*

The summer trip was done by Chris Wright, Phil Davill and Kent Wilson. The trip was delayed due to high fire danger at the start. However it went well and all loggers were serviced. The last two SDS loggers were replaced with Davills. Once again the rains came, just after we had finished calibrating the Maynards Well logger, the heavens opened and we were lucky to get back onto the main road. That night at Parachilna, the electric storm over Wilpena Pound was most spectacular.

### *April 06*

A small group went up in April, completed the logger exchange and did all the vegetation photography.

We have now completed almost 19 years of the Gammon Ranges project. Calibration of Tipping Bucket Raingauges is now a routine activity each trip, it takes half an hour or so per site, but the volunteers cope well with the procedure.

The challenges in the next 12 months include:

- Managing the changeover from CDMA to Next G mobile phone network. This will mean that the 4 existing CDMA modems will have to be changed to new generation equipment, costing about \$2,000.
- Upgrading the stream gauging station. We will be moving the logger equipment out of the cave and up to new stands and cabinets on the top of the crag. This will make servicing the equipment a lot safer for the volunteers, and will be a step in the process of getting the stream gauge data on line.
- Finally we hope to get the remaining sites on-line, accessible daily by mobile phone network.

*Report continued on pg 2.*

## SEG 2007 AGM

The 2007 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Scientific Expedition Group (SEG) is to be held on October 5 at the Unley Civic Centre, 18 Arthur St Unley at 7:30pm.

The speaker is Rob Lynn, a South Australian botanist, speaking on 'Unlocking South Australia's secrets'.

\*\*\*\*\*SEG 2007 Calendar\*\*\*\*\*

### **October**

- October 5 SEG AGM, Unley Civic Centre
- October 10-14 Minnowarra Spring survey

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**Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges Scientific  
Project Annual Report 2006/ 2007** continued  
*Fuel Costs*

We have coped with fuel costs by asking non-drivers to pay \$100 each, and trying to select vehicles that are reasonably economic on fuel.

*Pluviometer Project*

All four pluviometers with CDMA modems have worked extremely well. It seems a pity to have to abandon them early next year when the CDMA network will be turned off. John Love is designing sunshades for the modem boxes to try to keep them a bit cooler through the summer.

The use of a Palm Pilot pocket computer to download data from the loggers was successfully trialled in February 2007. On a more recent trip, the Palm Pilot failed because the "on" button was accidentally pressed during the walk, and the battery went flat. Fortunately no data was lost. Use of this instrument and the light-weight loggers and batteries makes the whole data recovery program much easier.

At the end of the financial year, there was still a credit balance of \$3,500. The construction of the new modem boxes, solar panels, regulators and steel frames for the stream gauge will use up most of this.

Purchase of new Next G modems at \$5,000. each will require funding. Requests will be made to DWLBC and Flinders Power.

*Cameras and laptops*

The new cameras have worked well and collected another years data from the vegetation monitoring points.

*Yellow Footed Rock Wallabies*

Under very dry conditions the wallabies have been difficult to find. We don't know whether the numbers have decreased, or whether they have moved across to the Gammon Hill side of the range.

*Future Program*

Business as usual. A trip was completed in mid-July 07, and all equipment serviced. This included a walk over Elephant Hill, South Tusk and North Tusk, places visited by Warren Bonython in the 1950s as evidenced by his handwritten note at the cairn at South Tusk Hill. The group continued the circuit, around the Wild Ass Creek catchment boundary, following a ridge-top route, and down to Gammon Creek by a fairly precipitous scree slope.

We expect that there will be an October long weekend trip that will include modifications to the Arcoona Bluff equipment, and the first step in the streamgauge upgrade. Graham Blair is planning to re-calibrate the sites at North Moolooloo, Pfitzners and Maynards Well. This will require patience and tolerance of dust, heat, wind and flies.

*Rainfall Data from the Gammons on the Web*

To see rainfall data from the Gammons, look at: <http://www.bom.gov.au/hydro/flood/sa/> for the web-map and [http://www.bom.gov.au/cgi-bin/wrap\\_fwo.pl?IDS60163.html](http://www.bom.gov.au/cgi-bin/wrap_fwo.pl?IDS60163.html) for the tables of data for the last 7 days.

Thanks to a generous grant by the Hydrological Society, there were sufficient funds to run the project through the year, and will cover the bulk of the cost of upgrading the stream gauging station. However, we will need more funds for the purchase of Next G modems.

Thank you to all who have provided so much support during the year, particularly John and Peter Love, Graham Blair, Chris Davill, Trent Porter and a host of others.

**An introduction to the July 2007  
Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges Data  
Recovery Trip**  
*Written by Chris Wright*

The Elephant Walk was planned to visit the southern part of the Gammon Plateau, an area that Warren Bonython first visited in 1956, at which time he named the trio of hills North Tusk, South Tusk and Elephant Hill. SEG visits North Tusk Hill routinely en-route to service the Plateau Pluviometer. Quite often when visiting Arcoona South Pluviometer, SEG members look wistfully at the long ridge heading south, and wonder what the country would look like.

We planned this July trip as the Elephant walk starting from Painter's Baseline cairn, climbing over the ridge and into Arcoona South catchment. On the map this is a short distance, less than 3 km. However we found that with packs fully loaded for a 2-day walk, climbing over the range was a bit slow. Nevertheless it was new ground and worth the effort. After reaching Arcoona South Pluvio at lunchtime, we climbed east to the adjacent saddle, a tricky slope with plenty of loose scree, and then followed the ridge to the south, camping in a Mallee patch on the

shoulder with lovely views of Mt Serle and the adjacent ranges.

The following day we continued up the ridge and across to Elephant Hill, then northeast along the saddle until we could turn down towards South Tusk. There we found Warren's old cache and a newer one with a message canister, and to our delight, Warren's original message from 50 years ago.

From there we continued along the Plateau to the Pluviometer to collect the data and calibrate the instrument, then back to North Tusk Hill in the late afternoon. Unfortunately while trying to hurry down the last bit of the walk, we took the steep route down to the creek and a couple of people slipped and fell. Trent Porter hurt his knee and John Love had some nasty grazes. This meant that the two of them decided not to continue on the second part of the walk. So we all camped at Vandenberg for a very cold night, and on the following day, six of us continued around the eastern rim of Wild Ass Creek catchment and across to Gammon Hill, while John and Trent returned to Pine Camp, and then continued south to Painter's Baseline to collect the vehicle.

The main group, Michelle Ho, Carly Tozer, Mark Porter, Jeanette Porter, Richard Koler and Chris Wright had a great day on the tops of the range ending up on Gammon Hill and then descended into Gammon Creek South in the last of the daylight, and with another nasty steep and scree-filled descent arrived at a reasonable camping spot in the creek. The following day, there was just a short walk down Gammon Creek to the park boundary fence where John Love's Prado was waiting for us.

This was an interesting walk that took us all through country that we had not visited previously. The country was extremely dry, not having received the heavy rainfall that fell on the Southern Flinders earlier in the year. The only surface water found was at Woodcutters Well and Gammon Springs. There were no flies! It was much too cold for them. We saw three groups of goats during the walk, totalling about 25 in all. There were wedge-tailed eagles over our heads most days, we are not sure whether the eagles thought we were dying- we might have looked as though we were.

All the scientific equipment we visited was in good condition. However, the sites that have

CDMA modems fitted will all have to be changed over to suit the Next-G mobile network. This may cost in excess of \$2,000. We will be looking for support from our backers to cover this.

#### LEADER'S REPORT

*Dates:* Fri. 13 July to Thur. 19 July 2007

*Leaders:* Chris Wright

*Expeditioners:* Chris Wright, John Love, Trent Porter, Mark Porter, Jeanette Porter, Richard Kohler, Michelle Ho, Carly Tozer

*Transport used:* 4WD ute (Trent Porter), Toyota Prado (John Love) with trailer

*Travel expenses:* \$100 per person, additional \$10 Friday night accommodation at Eddie and Gina Nichols' shearer's quarters at Maynard's Well, additional \$12 Wednesday night accommodation at Balcanoona Ranger's station

*Notes on the drive:* One tyre punctured (Toyota Prado) driving from Balcanoona shearer's quarters to Ranger's station. Return trip through Flinders Rangers past Wilpena Pound.

*Maintenance costs:* One tyre (Toyota Prado), one fuel filter

*Itinerary:* Two cars to meet at Gepps Cross at 6pm, Friday 13 July, refill at Hawker, lunch at Copley. Return to Adelaide on the 19 July.

*Description of the expedition:* Calibrate and change data loggers for pluviometers at Moolooloo, Pfitzner's Well, Maynard's Well, Arcoona Bluff, Exclusion Zone, Arcoona South, Plateau, Sambot, changed batteries on stream gauge.

#### *Water Caches:*

Wild Ass Waterhole: Not checked

Vandenberg Camp: Left an additional 15L

North Tusk Hill: Not checked

*Feral Animals:* Group of goats observed near Painter's Baseline. Group of goats on hill adjacent to Elephant Hill. Approximately a dozen goats at Gammon Creek, near Gammon Springs.

*Surface Water:* Shallow water at Gammon Springs. Discoloured, abundant goat and euro faecal matter. Water at Woodcutter's Well.

### **A second account of the July 2007 Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges Data Recovery Trip**

*Written by Michelle Ho and Carly Tozer*

Friday morning saw an early start for our Elephant Walk party, with some members meeting at Chris's house at 5am. This

involved 3:30am wake up calls and eight tired faces at Gepps Cross. Next stop was Jamestown for breakfast, which included greasy sausage rolls and sultana scones – to be used for bribery later. The journey was marked by a stop at Hawker where it was discovered that ‘vegetarian’ Carly was in fact involved in the MURDER of a bird found in the grate of John’s car.

Copley Bakery again supplied yummeicious pies, pasties, tarts and cheesecakes for travellers preparing for an afternoon of calibrating pluvios. Water and food drops in Vandenberg the next day allowed for lighter packs and decadent dinners throughout our Elephant migration.

Unfortunately, the descent of North Tusk Hill at dusk following a busy day touching all Elephant parts resulted in Trent twisting his knee halfway through the expedition. Our herd was reduced to six, with Trent and John walking out to Painter’s Baseline to retrieve the cars. After defrosting sleeping bags, tents, hands and feet, the remaining herd continued to Gammon Hill. The feature entertainment at lunchtime was a pair of gliding wedge tailed eagles investigating whether or not we were edible. The trip from Vandenberg across Gammon Hill into Gammon Creek allowed the three elephant calves, (Richard, Carly and Michelle) to try out their compass reading skills. With plenty of help, the calves managed to navigate their way into Gammon Creek via a very steep, Spinifex and scree filled spur.

Our final night was spent under a roof with Jeanette whipping up a feast from nothing (cottage pie, vegetarian pasta and fruit crumble served with a choice of two red wines) and extra early Christmas presents from Mark in the form of army rat packs.

The Elephant Walk succeeded in servicing all pluvios in the itinerary and the stream gauge, in addition to naming a couple of important landmarks: Bird Poo Hill, the 895 peak south of Arcoona South pluvio, and Wright Creek, the creek west of North Tusk Hill.

One of the important investigations for future GRASP expeditions should be to discover how Chris Wright manages to store the scientific gear, personal camping equipment, food and water in addition to a fully stocked bar, aperitifs, dessert parlour, café and cookie store in the one back pack.

Our thanks to the Nicholls’ family for providing us with shearers quarters and lively company on the first night as well as the staff at Balcanoona Ranger’s station for supplying us with a lovely Ranger’s house on our final night.



### **EXPEDITION SCRUBBY PEAK 2007 – the first week**

*Report by Richard Willing*

The Scrubby Peak convoy left Adelaide on the morning of Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2007. Graeme Oates and I drove for 7 hours the next day to join in what activities we could during a brief visit. We reached Kododo camp in time to erect our tents before sunset. How well timed it was! The workers came home soon after having erected the pitfall lines and baited the mammal traps, scornful that we had avoided some manual labour. The night was calm and cloudless with big stars and a waxing moon.

On Monday the survey part of the expedition started at 7.30, with groups bearing lunch, water, notebooks and sunscreen leaving camp to study birds, mammals, reptiles, vegetation, ants, and search for mallee fowl nests. Bat persons work by night, so Annette continued preparing her gear and setting harp traps. The sites for the first week were mostly north of the camp on a 50 km narrow one-way track through the scrub. Drivers parked off the track so that others could pass.

Wednesday, was a day of multiple seasons. It started a fine, warm and beautiful day, and I went out with the mammal group to check animals in the traps. We finished the morning round and returned to camp for lunch. Dark clouds gathered and a violent thunder squall hit the camp with strong winds, heavy rain and hail. The kitchen and store tents were flooded, and several others suffered the indignity of partial collapse, but the new marquees took it very well. Groups working north had little rain, while those south were drenched. The rain eased, but the wind remained fairly strong and gusty, ruining the evening for bat collecting.

Thursday was fine and sunny and all groups had a good day in the field. The vegetation survey of the first 8 sites was completed, good collections of mammals and skinks were obtained, some new mallee fowl sites were found, and several bats were collected

in the evening. Traps were to be moved to the next 8 sites the next day, mostly south of the camp. Archaeological studies of the ruins of the nearby Pine Lodge were yet to commence.

Reluctantly we departed on Friday to head for other duties back home. It was obvious, though, that everything was going well at Expedition Scrubby Peak at the halfway mark. A full report will follow later.

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### **MINNAWARRA BIODIVERSITY PROJECT Spring Survey 10-14 October 2007**

The spring survey will start soon, coinciding with the end of the school holidays. Mammals, reptiles and birds will be surveyed. All helpers are welcome, including families. It is a great opportunity for young people to become acquainted with bush creatures.

Traps will be opened on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007, so the first round of the traps will be on the morning of Thursday 11<sup>th</sup>. They will be closed again on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> October, the day before school resumes.

Inspection of the traps commences at 8:30 am each day. This involves going to each of the 8 sites in the scrub by 4 wheel drive and checking the various traps. At each of the sites 6 pitfall traps (sunk permanently into the ground) are opened for 4 days, when a small fence is run along the ground above them. Small mammals and reptiles are caught this way. At each site there are also 15 Elliott traps, small aluminium boxes that snap shut when a small mammal runs in. The bait is a mixture of peanut butter and rolled oats. The animals are weighed, sexed, marked and released. At each end of each line is a cage trap for larger animals. The traps are inspected again around 4 pm. After the final inspection the pit fall traps are closed, and the others collected and cleaned up for next time.

Camping facilities are available, so it is possible to attend for 1 to 4 days. Subscriptions or small donations (suggested \$10 adults, \$5 students, double for campers) to help cover expenses are welcome. If you can help or for further information contact Richard on 8558 6381 or 0408 807 517.

### **Extract from South Coast Track, Tasmania, February 2006 Bushwalk** *cont. from last issue of SEGments*

Walkers: Phil Davill, Chris Wright, Janet Davill  
*Written by Janet Davill*

*Wednesday 15/02/06 New River Lagoon to  
Granite Beach*

It is not a long walk today, just to Granite Beach so we can be hard up against the South Cape Range for the next tough climb tomorrow. Norbert has warned us that "Oh the track is really dirty mate!" In Norbert's parlance that means it is really mucky and muddy. He says that people think the worst of the walk is over once they get to the South Cape Range but that this range is very hard in its own way, although not nearly as high as the Ironbounds.

After breakfast, I wandered down to the lagoon with my camera and chatted to Norbert, who was looking over the scene. I was snap happy in the lovely early morning light. Back in our camp, Phil offered a second cup of tea. I took mine down to the lagoon to drink. All was calm on the lagoon with gulls dabbling, black swans cruising and mist raised by the sun on the water to the east. There is the sound of breakers coming from just over the dividing sand spit opposite and the Ile du Golfe was like a sentinel on the horizon out to sea. All the hard work to reach here had definite rewards.

It was a warm morning and warmish walk too. We were packed to go by 8:40am. Norbert left earlier but we met again at the Granite Beach camp. The first section is along the undulating tops of old vegetated and stabilised sand dunes, through tea tree, moss, ferns and Cutting Grass. There are tantalizing views through the trees, from time to time, of the lagoon and ocean beyond. It is just lovely and I have the luxury of stopping to look or photograph at my leisure as I let Phil and Chris catch up. It is heavenly easy walking with the down grades not feeling painful. The track is 'clean' in Norbert-speak – sandy with dry leaf litter. It takes some time for Phil and Chris to catch up.

The end of this delightful section comes soon after and we climb down the end of the sand hills on a chain and wooden strut ladder – going down backwards. Then it is across the deepish and narrow Milford Creek outlet.

After a small summit conference by the men involving the map, we made our way across

a sand spit. With that brief bit of flat walking over we then tackled a stiff ascent up some high ground named Wierah Hill. It was a bit of a task to climb up. From there, we continued on over an undulating flattish area bisected by creeks. We were then back to button grass bog and a very muddy track. The views out to the coast were as spectacular as ever with the Hen and Chicken Islands to be seen out to sea. We passed the turn off to Osmiridium Beach and could hear the sound of the surf breaking down there.

As we descend towards an unnamed creek, we meet a very serious young man coming the other way. In clipped tones he informs us he is on day 2 of a 23 day walk that includes a climb of 'PB' (Precipitous Bluff). He refers to 'we' rather than 'I will climb', so I am puzzled as to who else he means. I the spot another walker talking to Chris down in the creek gully. He turns out to be an older man – possibly in his 60s or early 70s and is the companion of the severe young bloke. I observe that he has a decidedly slightly insane twinkle in his eye. He is planning a walk into New River Lagoon – well he is nearly there – going up 'PB' and then returning out to Cockle Creek – thus avoiding the Ironbounds. His younger companion will go on to Melaleuca to pick up a food drop and then go on into presumably the Western Arthurs some serious solo bushwalking for 2 weeks. Completely balmy, both of them. The kindly old bushwalker (kind but completely bonkers) says our track ahead isn't too bad but that the South Cape Range track is dreadful.

I move off while Chris and Phil get some water from the creek. I immediately get stuck in a bog and have to extricate myself with a struggle. The track isn't too bad. It is very warm now and I keep my eye out for Joe Blakes. Eventually the bog cuts out and we start walking up and over a series of undulations where the track is quite dry. The saddles of the up and downs are sheltered and treed with some magnificent *Eucalyptus* sp. Some are really huge but most are just big and tall. The track is very easy through this forest as it has minimal undergrowth – a pleasure to walk along. We plummet down a drop onto the beach of Surprise Bay. There is a rocky 'gateway' to this beach and Agoun has left a couple of arrangements. One is reflective of the gap in the rocks leading out to the stretch of beach.

This beach is a soft one and I can see other footprints wandering all over vainly looking for the firmest line. We do the same with a similar lack of success. It is a bit of a slog up the kilometre or so of sand. However, the usual beauty of views out to islands over a blue sea makes it more pleasure than not.

We can see two seated figures up near the beach end near the outlet of Surprise Rivulet. They turn out to be a young couple in bathers, playing scrabble. They have Yorkshire accents and are obviously enjoying exposing most of their skin to the harsh rays of the Australian sun. Leaving them to flirt with sunstroke, we cross the rivulet out flow and haul ourselves up rock face with the aid of some fixed ropes. Then some made wooden steps kick in and we go on and up to the campsite level. The young folks appear to be the only people presently camped here. They had said they were taking the whole walk slowly, stopping at most camp sites. This would be a lovely thing to do if the weather was mostly good.

The camp site looks to be able to accommodate four or five camps and all have stunning ocean views. Beyond the camp and on up the track lies the third section of today's effort – a stinker of a climb. This is up and over the spur of Shoemaker Point, leading down onto Granite Beach. The far end of Granite Beach is our destination for tonight's camp. We engage in a plod of a haul with lots of brief rests. The descent over the other side is a little more gradual in height change than the ascent and therefore kinder to sore muscles, which have been recently shocked into severe activity. As we pop out of the woodwork and down onto the beach, it becomes rather obvious as to why it is named Granite Beach. There is a dearth of sand and a plethora of smooth, rounded, granite, bowling ball sized, wonky stones to traverse. Phil and I wobble slowly along but Chris, the renowned Rock Hopper, is a distant speck. He soon disappears to the left, presumably to the camp site.

Phil and I make a painful progress, trying to use the skerrick of sand between the vast array of stones and the coastal vegetation. We are forced to mainly negotiate the stones however. After crossing a creek outlet, we have to negotiate around a rocky point. It has a sign warning not to attempt this if it is high tide. It is low tide, so round we wobble on the stones. We finally reach Chris has re appeared to guide us in. He is standing at the base of an alarming rock face and I can see the famous waterfall beyond him. The

camp is mapped well up from beach level and we now realize how well up it must be. The rock face is quite high and steep. The track notes make much of the waterfall as a venue for a refreshing shower after a hard day's bushwalking. I consider that it is the young and fit who would be bothered to negotiate the slippery looking rock face, again and again, to sample such delights.

We all reach the top with no mishaps. Up on this level, there is a little trickle creek coming down and plummeting over to form the waterfall. A young chap is there preparing for a very public wash as a bit away upstream is where everyone collects their drinking water. We dig out our empty Nalgene bottles and Chris fills them. I grab my pack back and carry 3L plus Norbert's little old 500ml Décor bottle that Chris had kindly brought down for him. From this creek, there is even more climbing up to the campsite on a much less steep path through low shrubs.

I meet dear Norbert coming down with his cook pots to get more water and to help Phil and Chris. I tell him I will drop his water bottle by his tent. Once up among the camp sites, all in and under low trees, I see Norbert's tent and then look for Chris' pack. At this, a small tent unzips just past the youngsters and the father of the father-son team pokes his head out cheerily and points me further into the trees, where Chris has laid claim to what looks to be another just right choice. The father and son have walked from Osmiridium Beach today and say it is a cracker of a camp site, with a rivulet to swim in and a beautiful sandy beach. Chris and Phil then appeared and we set to and erect tents.

Phil decided to go down to the creek for a wash, braving a walk through the bushes. Word has spread around the camp that a snake of substantial size has been spotted there this afternoon. Surely it has retired for the evening by now. Norbert comes over and yarns to Chris and me. He mentions how there are stories of people 'losing the plot' along this track, discarding their gear and wandering off into the bush - never to be found. He says there is a heap of such gear remains near his tent. It is a sad thought if it is true. Clean Phil returns and Norbert retires. He is an early to bed, early to rise fellow – unlike us liqueur sipping dilettantes.

After dinner I spotted little ratty things running about in the lower branches of the trees above us. Oh dear, food definitely

either hung up or in the tent tonight – actually, it really should be standard operational procedure what with the variety of pilfering creatures of the night, that inhabit the beautiful bush down here in Tasmania. So far on our collective walks, we have encountered possums, pademelons, bettongs, quolls and now, bush rats. We stash all the food into a selection of garbages and Chris elects to suspend his between two trees while we put ours in the tent.

We are all in bed by 9:30pm, as we expected a long and very hard day the next day. We will climb up and over the South Cape Range, cross the South Cape Rivulet and go on to the Lion Rock camp site. This is to give us a bit of a head start to walk out to the bus the following day. Usually people camp at the rivulet as it is apparently very pretty there.

*Thursday 16/02/06 Granite Beach to Lion Rock*

Phil gets up at 6:00am and I follow and we do the usual cup of tea and porridge brekkie and pack up. I am all sore again and not at all full of beans like yesterday. Before we leave, I nip over and look at the pile of discarded gear behind Norbert's tent.

We had asked Norbert what the South Cape Range track section was like and he had replied, "Oooh, dirty, mate, real dirty" – this is Norbert-speak for 'the track is muddy and really awful' – and so it proved. We head off out of camp and all too soon start to climb steeply. The track was not rocky on the slope but very muddy. It must be mud of a superior, glutinous consistency as not to flow down but to stay in situ stubbornly in guggy patches on the up track. The mud wallows did become larger and deeper on the tops and in the hollows of the root infested down grades. The whole traverse of the range; up, top, down, was that of a constant presentation of difficulties of an ever changing nature. Every step seemed to necessitate a negotiation of the best way to tackle each unique combination of depth and width of mud and each associated configuration of slippery roots – also unique in every mud wallow. You could feel the energy being sapped out of the body as you tried to hoist yourself out of mid calf depth mud with its excellent suction qualities. It kept you busy all day! There was some compensation however, with the beautiful vegetation we passed through.

There were lots of mosses and ferns and big low spread trees to admire as we slopped

and slid slowly by. Not all the vegetation was user friendly. We went through many a stretch of Cutting Grass and fern that over grew and obscured the track from view so that your footfall security was uncertain.

The map indicated six main climbs but there were many more ups and downs than indicated by the map's 40m contour interval. My right side Achilles tendon has started to hurt savagely.

We have not been afforded any views from high up today as the stratus is well down on the range. This misty moisture makes the forest look like prime dinosaur country – or at least pre hominid. We did not stop for lunch as there was simply no where to sit either side of the track. Even small creek crossings were too mucky for sitting anywhere. We finally came to some button grass flats that were equally unsuitable for a lunch spot. A knolly hill further on looked slightly drier and once up on its slopes, we came across a well worn, dry area that looked to be the first stopping spot for everyone on this section. I was really tired with all that hoicking of feet out of the mud. Our vita wheats and cheese and pickle, plus a cup of tea, with a really decent glob of condensed milk in it, rebuilt some enthusiasm within me, but Phil and Chris were looking a tad tired too.

All too soon, we feel we really must get on with it. On we go and my recollection of the post lunch track can best be described as: mud and more mud; steep ups; hideously slippery downs and bogs on anything level. It is diabolical walking. We have certainly done the hard yards today. Then, quite suddenly, the track becomes dry and level and goes through charming coastal tea tree. We can see glimpses of the ocean and then we pop down a bit of a slidy bank to the sandy outlet of South Cape Rivulet. The bottom bit has a few made steps – the first track work for ages.

Chris, who has ripped ahead, is waiting patiently and has examined the outlet for the best wading across spot. We all slosh through and across. It is about mid calf depth and the cold water is heavenly on my painful Achilles. I can see Norbert and three other chaps around a little cook fire over the sand stretch and below the far bank. We have a conference as we slowly walk over to them. It is 3 to 4 Km. on to Lion Rock camp. I am keen to be closer to the walk's end tonight in case my Achilles is really stiff and painful tomorrow after the inactivity of sleep. I

consider it might be wiser to keep on while I am mobile.

Norbert is heating water on his little fire to offer us a cup of tea. I would love for us to camp here with him. Apart from his interesting company, it looks to be so beautiful with the broad rivulet coming out of the wall of forest to the sea. We explain why we feel we should move on. We bid Norbert farewell with mixed feelings and go off down the beach. Norbert has said that the track ahead was quite 'clean' last time he walked it.

It is a bit of a climb up from the beach and then a steep climb up over a headland. There are more made steps so it feels almost easy after the icky track conditions experienced earlier. The track becomes a mixture of dry and muddy sections on the top of the spur and down to the next beach. This is easy walking although not the firmest of beaches. The final section is another headland spur – larger this time and is also a combination of long muddy stretches interspersed with a few dry bits. We can hear breakers as we come down the other side and catch glimpses of Lion Rock and the sea.

Phil also spots two insane surfers bobbing around in the waves. As we observe them, they appear to consistently miss the waves and are being washed closer and closer to Lion Rock. I'm sure they know what they are doing. If they don't, we are not about to jump in and save them. After descending onto the beach, we pass a few sand hills and spot Chris. He has been in forward scout mode again and has found the camp site. It is over the small and neatly bridged creek outlet and up an alarmingly tall set of nifty wooden steps. Chris insists on carrying my pack up, bless him. I limp up behind him and Phil follows with his enormous pack still weighing him down. We go past a succinct sign reminding all who can read that this camp site is a fuel stove only area. The surfers appear to have a camp on the other side of the creek up in coastal teatree, as opposed to the designated track campsite way up on top of the vegetated sandhills.

The track goes on and down into a sandy hollow among coastal shrubs and there are various bare patches for tents. We select two for tents and one for cooking. All of us are tired but manage to totter about setting up and starting preparations for tea. While the veggies are soaking, I grab my wash gear



and limp back down the stairs. The thought of being cleaner outweighing the pain and effort of climbing the stairs again. A young fellow is on the beach and the two surfers are coming out of the sea. The two surfers look to be from Japan perhaps. I approach the other lad and ask if surfing is over for the day and if they are all going back to camp. I explain that I am going to have a wash where the creek runs out to sea and that to achieve this task, I will need to take off all my clothes. Would they possibly be prepared to respect my privacy? Respect it! Well, after turning puce in the face with embarrassment and ceasing any eye contact, they all cannot get back to their camp (and thus out of sight) fast enough.

Once I have the area safely to myself, I strip off and have a gloriously cold wash in the icy water. It feels so very good and I smell so much better. As I go back up the stairs, I observe the little surf grommets stoking a substantial campfire in a circle of well blackened stones up in the tea trees. The little buggers! If they need a fire to warm up after being in the highly refreshing waters of the Southern Ocean all day, dropping their core temperatures considerably, why can't they make it down on the sand and not up in the tea tree where it could get away? It is not because a naked lady was down there, there is no sign of a fireplace anywhere down on the sand at all. I go back to camp and the men take their turn down in nature's bathroom.

Once we are all fragrant and fit for socializing at close quarters, the three of us work as a team to produce our evening meal of soup, macaroni cheese and then stewed dried apricots and quondongs with custard. All our food and rubbish is then bagged and either hung up or put in the tent. None of us has spied any marsupials or rodents in the shrubbery but we cannot be too careful if we want an incident free sleep tonight. Norbert had said there was a notorious family of particularly evil bush rats at South Cape Rivulet, so I wonder how they are all getting along there tonight. It was a long, hard slog today. Phil is as whacked as I have seen him in ages. The walk has been such a mixture of exhilaration and hard struggle, but no doubt in a month or two, we will have forgotten all the pain and only remember the good bits! I down a couple of aspirin and stretch a bit before settling in the fond hope that it will help me to move well tomorrow.

*Friday 17/02/06 Lion Rock to Cockle Creek and on to Hobart.*

It was another moonlit night with the sound of the sea. I slept well enough in patches until 6:30am. We took things slowly with breakfast and packing up, aiming for a departure time of around 8:30am.

We take a good look at Lion Rock all dramatic and rugged in the morning light and document it and us with a few pics. Then we set off down the beach. As if to make sure the beautiful coast will be firmly imprinted in our memories, we indulge in a few backward gazes from time to time. I perceive a definite feeling of crossing a border. We are leaving the special area, where it costs some hardships and risks to get into and through and approaching the easier day walker territory. This area is, in my mind, not so special as a result of being accessible to most ambulant folks. I am very much looking forward to the expected easier track conditions.

The climb up onto the headland at beach end is up some very civilized steps. This is very reflective of Lion Rock being a popular day walk destination. The track skirts around the headland giving great views out to sea and back to Lion Rock. No, it still does not look like Simba to me. Heading inland, the track goes into old sand hills vegetated with lovely tea tree forest. There is track construction a plenty and we are nipping along at a fine rate. The vegetation becomes more 'rain-forestry' as we continue and we walk alongside a trickling creek. All is very lovely, shady and cool. The sun feels to have some punch in it where it penetrates the canopy. The band of forest cuts out and a wide and lengthy button grass plain stretches ahead. Chris calls for a rest stop on the edge of this open country.

We have met a number of people coming in, carrying either a day pack or just a water bottle. They were making haste, as if they had to get the Kilometres over and done with and did not want to mooch along looking at much at that stage of the walk – almost 'competitive' speed walking. Often, with a couple, the man is ahead of the woman, leading the way or merely not waiting.

A few more pass on by as we sit on the various remains of a broken sign and survey the scene. The young physio from yesterday gallops by. This is no exaggeration as he is practically jogging and has left his two companions in his wake apparently. He says

they all have an arrangement whereby he can go as fast as he likes during the in between the stops sections. He would be hard to keep up with and obviously hates to slow down. He is built a bit like a triathlete, so is very much a serious but pleasant 'tiger walker' in the Peter Treseder mold I suspect. He says he realizes he has dropped his tent fly – that was attached to the outside of his modestly sized pack (he must be an abstemious eater and eschew lots of comfort giving gear). He is of two minds about dropping his pack and running back to find it or just to hope his mates will see it and bring it along. He has decided on the latter, not being able to bear a backward step.

A two plank boardwalk appears to run a fair way along the plain and he soon disappears from view on this optimal walking surface. After a suitable recovery time, that has been pleasant to just sit and gaze at the line of hills that back-drop the plain, we head off again. It is indeed incredibly easy walking along the planking. My temporary physio must have fairly sprinted this section. There are the remains of burned shrubs dotted over the swampy plain and I spot some orchids that look like 'Parson's Bands' (Eriochilus), except these are slightly pinkish as opposed to the white South Australian ones they resemble. The planking curves towards some forested high ground – on the opposite side of the plain to the aforementioned back-drop hills. It is a bit of a rude shock to the leg muscles to have a bit of a climb up onto this.

The track will now contour around the base of this arrangement of low hills. We meet a couple of about our vintage and they stop to talk. Chris is leading as usual and he inevitably engages other on coming walkers he meets in conversation. The gentleman has an accent with a distinct South African twang and reveals that they are originally from Botswana but living in Perth now. He says he has spotted a 'Leek' orchid and when I show great interest, walks back several metres to show me.

It looks to be a *Gastrodia* perhaps – to me. He says it is not as spectacular as West Australian orchids and I say nothing really matches the splendor of W.A. wildflowers. After a few more pleasantries, the couple moves off towards Lion Rock while we head on in the Cockle Creek direction. We are now going through drier eucalypt type forest and pass by an old stump with wood cutter step board holes in it. We are moving quite swiftly along the dry track – until Chris gives an

abrupt command to stop, which we do and allow a medium sized snake time to get out of our way. It whizzes off the track and into the bushes and is seen no more. There are no more herpetological thrills for the rest of the walk and we get to the sign out shelter after 3 hours of good steady walking from our camp.

We wander up a vehicle track to the ranger's office and see the Tas-link bus unloading the day's travellers into Cockle Creek. We hasten up to check that the timetable has not changed for some reason and that it is not leaving any time soon. The driver, a very friendly weather beaten chap, assures us that he won't be departing for a good 2 hours yet. Then he asks me if I would like a nice meat pie when we stop at Dover this afternoon. I start salivating (mentally) and ask him if I can have sauce with it. He seems amused at that response. The talk of pies spurs us into thinking seriously about lunch. There are some picnic tables nearby and we go over and spread out all our gear and lunch bags over one. Phil lights the Trangia and we enjoy some smoked oysters and sesame crackers with a cup of tea. There are two men at the next table and conversation reveals that they are about to set off to walk in to Melaleuca, out the Port Davey Track and to exit via Scotts Peak Dam. One chap is from Sydney and one from Germany. Chris has a good old chat to the German gentleman about Berlin. Chris' son Alasdair is studying there.

As we are all a bit sweaty, we feel a wash and change of clothes would be the sociable thing to do if we are going to board a small 22 seat bus eventually. I take the 1L squirry bottle down onto the shore of Rocky Bay. (Cockle Creek flows out into this bay. I find a very slightly secluded spot in some bushes and have a cursory wash. I am open to the view of any passing boat or person wandering down onto the shore from the camping ground back from the shore – so it is a very swift and discreet wash. Back at our picnic table base, I review my vast wardrobe and select my long strides, cleanest thermal and my sandals, nip into the adjacent dunny and kit up. I feel so much more presentable, even if I do not look it. Then I try to make sense of my belongings and start to pack everything up. The father and son come by and chat. The son has been bitten soundly by mozzies and asks if we have any lotion for itches. I loan him my Stingose – that being the only thing remotely relevant to mozzie bites that I am carrying. He says the bites

feel better as a result. It starts to rain at that point and so we all ferry our gear to under the verandah of the ranger's office building.

Norbert arrives out of the wilderness as does Martin and Co. The young woman looks thoroughly knackered and is walking with a definite post rogaine style gait, so she must be a bit stiff and sore. Norbert is looking pleased with himself that he is not too late for the bus. He looks a picture in thermal tights and a very saggy singlet. He does not stand on ceremony in the sartorial department, opting for comfort and function. Martin and Co. ask after my Achilles injury - it must have been a topic of conversation at the South Cape Rivulet camp last night for them to know about it. The bus pulls up in front of the building and people start to assemble.

The bus driver loads up our gear and while he waits for the official departure time, chats to us about the track work he used to do for National Parks. He helped build the latest Pelion Hut and said the powers that be helicoptered all the building materials in. When they brought in the first lot of metal bolts, they just dropped them out of the chopper and the workers had to spend quite some time digging them all back out of the button grass peat.

We skirt the Recherche Bay coast and then duck inland and then out to Dover for a rest stop. Dover looks to be just getting the real estate and tourist boom. The town is pretty with all heritage painted buildings. We wander up the street and check out the real estate agent's window and the church yard with some old, restored gravestones. Then back to the neat and clean conveniences.

We all pile back onto the bus and we talk to Norbert and Chris talks to the little Japanese lady about Berlin. We are soon into Geeveston where we will leave this bus and wait for the bigger Hobart bus. We reluctantly say farewell to our lovely driver. The big road-liner style bus arrives and a lot of young Geeveston folks pile off, dressed in the latest cool adolescent chic and talking a bit like Vicky Pollard – some of the young women are a bit reminiscent of that particular Little Britain character in appearance as well. I suspect they have had a day of it up in the big smoke of Hobart. After they have dispersed, we load our packs into the luggage bays and pile onto the bus. The driver is another friendly chap – perhaps the day of the psychotic ex log truck driver bus captain is over now in Tasmania. We head

off towards Hobart and the drive is through a series of lovely typical Tasmanian coastal locales. We pull into Kettering and Norbert says his farewells to us all. We see him meet his partner – a robust looking lady and she seizes him and gives him a peck style kiss. As we pull out from the park spot, we see Norbert getting rather wearily into their car.

We zoom off to Hobart, now on dual carriageway, and soon get into the 'burbs. Then the driver somehow threads the huge bus through the narrow streets of the Hobart CBD and pulls up outside the Taslink terminal. We unload our packs and hoist them into the waiting room area. Phil and Chris head off on foot to the Hobart BoM to see about our civilized bags – and for Chris to link up with Chris McGeorge for his billet.

I waited for the men to return and at 6:00pm the girl at the desk informed me that they are closing up in 5 minutes. I raced to the loo and then dragged the 3 packs, walking sticks and Chris' didgeridoo out onto the footpath. I had to reassure the bus driver that I am not heading off with him to Launceston this evening so he does not have to load all my bags. He looked relieved and the bus soon moved off.

I sit on my old thermarest square and read or contemplate the architecture of the church opposite and the buildings in association with it. A Subaru pulls up and out pops Phil and Chris. Chris Mc George and off-sider have dropped them off and Wally has been contacted so all is tickety-boo. Wally is on his way to pick us up. I have also been SMS-ing the kids and Christopher actually rings me to tell me about All British Day and how the Series One was awarded best project in restoration. I see Wally's silver grey Disco approaching and tell Christopher I am about to go off in Landrover engineering excellence. It is good to see Wally looking very well and full of energy. He loads us up and whisks us off to his home to meet his wife, Robin and to give us a slap up tea – Weber roast chook apparently.

This marks the official end of the walk I decide. We are now truly back to civilization, especially being in the finest Landrover diesel Discovery on the planet. 'Tired but happy' would describe the three of us I think. Glad it is over – but glad we did it.



# SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION GROUP - Membership

The Scientific Expedition Group came into being at a public meeting on 21st August 1984.

Membership is open to any persons, family or organisation interested in the following aims:

- \* The promotion and running of expeditions of a scientific, cultural and adventurous nature.
- \* The furthering of knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the natural environment.
- \* Promotion of the values and philosophy of wilderness.
- \* Enabling people to learn the skills required for planning and running expeditions, and to develop sound field techniques.

Members receive regular information on SEG activities and expeditions

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