

FRIENDS of VULKATHUNHA-GAMMON RANGES NATIONAL PARK Inc.

NEWSLETTER No. 23
July 2022

Wayanha - Tyakatya & Wirnga
Photo – Graeme Oats

WAYANHA – TYAKATYA & WIRNGA

Wayanha (Mt. McKinlay), the heart of the Adnyamathanha country, overlooks Nepabunna, where the Adnyamathanha people live in a community today. Tyakatya and Wirnga, the two peaks to the right in the shadow of Wayanha represent two old women.

Text taken from page 115 of Dorothy Tunbridge's book Flinders Ranges Dreaming. Aboriginal Studies Press Canberra 1988.

WORKING BEES – 2022

OOCABOOLINA RESTORATION

Sunday 24th to Saturday 30th July

Contact: Graeme Oats – gdoats@bigpond.net.au

- BALCANOONA RE-VEGETATION & WEETOOTLA MONITORING

Friday 19th to Friday 26th August

Contact: Martin Caon – m.caon56@gmail.com

- BALCANOONA RE-VEGETATION

Friday 26th August to Friday 2nd September.

Contact: Roger Mathers - roger_mathers@yahoo.com

NOTE: - There is an underscore (_) between roger and mathers.

- During the first week at Balcanoona, the emphasis will be plant maintenance, weed reduction, and seed collection. Second week will focus on planting and irrigation.



OOCABOOLINA – REPORT OF THE MAY VISIT

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT: - Isobel Barrett, Phil Gaukroger, Neil & Margaret Hampton (new members), Jan & Ray Hutchinson, Mal Kirkham and Graeme Oats.

WORKS UNDERTAKEN: -

FLOODING - A storm in late January had caused the small creek to the west & north of the precinct to flood to such extent that the entry gate, post and 20 metres of fencing had been swept away and deposited past the long drop toilet. Another section of the northern fence again of around 20 metres had been removed and dumped into the creek, with posts, fencing wire and star droppers intact. Vegetative debris had collected against other fencing along the remainder of the north fence and the entire east & south fences. Water had entered the hut leaving a film of silt in the porch, kitchen, lounge and the southern verandah.

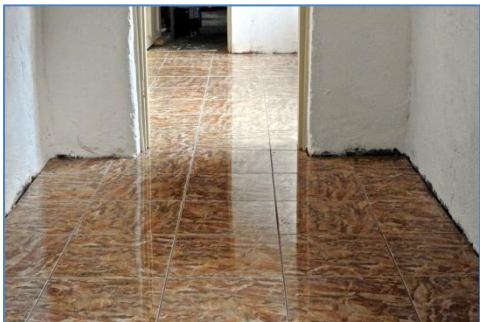


Flooding repairs –this occupied considerable time over the first 3 days.

Mal's 4WD has a winch which we attached to the gate and post and dragged it back roughly into position. Mal, Ray, Phil, Neil and Graeme replaced the posts and star droppers, and untangled the wire mesh. Isobel without prompting gathered a broom, dust pan, mop and water and proceeded to clean off the silt leaving the hut looking cleaner than ever and Isobel also cleaned the south verandah of silt.

Painting – painting mainly comprised of touch up jobs as all walls and timber had been painted on previous trips. Some of these were, painting around the French door's glass panels, some skirting and door frames.

Floor Tiling – the CMB had approved tiling the floors of the store and porch. Jan initially did a "trial run" on the best layout and starting point.



Late in the week Jan commenced the laying of the tiles, whilst Ray, Neil and Mal were busy measuring and cutting tiles to fit where full tile was not needed. Ray, Jan, Neil & Margaret stayed 2 extra days to complete the tiling and grouting.

Gardening - There is evidence of a garden when the hut was occupied during the pastoral era. Stone rings & paths are roughly outlined. Isobel and Margaret cleared away the ephemeral weeds. Jan & Ray restored the garden where many indigenous plants have regerminated after the flood. Graeme planted inside

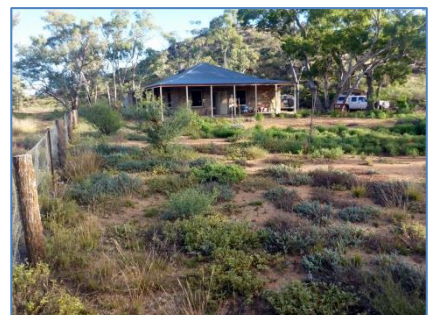


the southern fence a Eucalyptus camaldulensis, Iga, Quandong and a Myoporum all propagated by Martin Caon. The Red Mallee that had been planted in April 2021 is well established and in good health.

Store Room Window – a frame was installed around the window by Mal, painted by Isobel.

Bedroom 1 – Security Screens – were delivered to site by Graeme ready for installing in July.

Bird Watching – Jan Hutchinson, a very good amateur photographer has provided a list of 28 species.



JANUARY 2022 RAIN EVENT

The Park has responded to the significant rain event in late January. Ephemeral and perennial grasses and weeds have germinated, grown and seeded. Trees and bushes of various species have also responded and with further winter rains should continue to grow.

A small grove of Native Apricot (*Pittosporum Augustifolia* - Adnyamathanha - Matu) varying in age has been located on a knoll west of the windmill.

Water was flowing in Mount McKinlay Creek from the spring (Yedlachanna) upstream from Oocaboolina. All photos in this report by Graeme Oats.



NEW GRANT

The Friends were again successful in obtaining a grant through the SA Arid Lands Landscapes Grassroots 2022-23 program.

President Martin and member Chris Kirby lodged an application to fund a brochure “**Most Commonly Sighted Birds in Vulkathunha-GRNP**” for public distribution.

L-R: - Southern Whiteface, (Chris Kirby) Grey fronted and white plumed honeyeaters, (Jan Hutchinson) Rufous Whistler (Georgia Darter)



Early Gammons Hikes

Provided by Ray Sinclair-Wood

THIS IS A LIST of hikes in the Gammons before 1950. It distinguishes hiking from incursions by local station people, prospectors, fossickers, and such. For example, the rush to the Worturpa Gold-field in 1899 attracted 'quite 400 men', *The Advertiser* said at the time. So prospectors alone would have thoroughly scoured the Ranges that far back.

This is an updated version of 'Early Hikes in the Gammon Ranges' in the December 2011 *SEGments*, the South Australian Scientific Expedition Group's journal. Both articles are © Ray Sinclair-Wood.

1. The brothers Gordon 'Smiler' and Bentley Greenwood of Mt Serle and Arkaroola Stations explored the margins of the Gammons between the 1st & 2nd World Wars. Their camping-hiking trip up Balcanoona Creek seems to have been in *the mid-1920s*, going by the cars in their re-photographed photos.



1. 'Smiler' & Bentley Greenwood, & ? in Bunyip Cranny on a mid-1920s hike. Photo courtesy Greenwood Family

The picture left shows two of their party in Bunyip Cranny (a much later name). It's captioned 'Creek where ferns grow in Gammon Range'. There are two men in it, so there had to be three in their party.

The photo was torn before being re-photographed,

but is valuable historically. It's one of four photos of their hike.

2. There was apparently a Scout hike in the Gammons in 1936 after the Australian Scout Corroborree in the Belair National Park, but I can't confirm it.

3. Reg Sprigg writes that, '[Sir Douglas] Mawson walked his [University Geology] students including me fully into it [the Gammons] from several directions in *the late 1930s*.'

4. Adelaide University students including John P. Keeves planned a *May 1945* Gammons hike. But when they applied to Mawson, a trustee for the South Australian Exploration Fund, Keeves says he urged them to hike around Paralana Hot Springs with Geiger Counters instead (presumably because of the then great interest in the Mt Painter Mines and

the world-wide search for uranium). So they didn't go to the Gammons after all.

5. Ralph 'Bill' Beckwith, Roger Irving, Geoff Jones, and Don Lancaster were on the fringes of the Gammons, including climbing Mt Serle, on their 5½ day hike from Copley to Blinman via Angepena Homestead in *November 1945*.



6. Bonython's aborted 3-day July 1946 hike. Rescuing Bob Crocker (broken leg). Stretching him down into Mainwater Pound. Bonython left. Fred Steadman with peaked cap beside Crocker. Bob Wilson front of stretcher, Malcolm McKenzie rear. Taking photo, Bentley Greenwood. Courtesy Greenwood Family

6. Warren Bonython planned a three-day hike from a base camp at Loch Ness Well, with Fred Steadman and Bob Crocker, in *July 1946*. It was to be up on to Blue Range via Steadman Ridge, South-East Range, and it seems through Western Gorge and Italowie South Branch back to Loch Ness. But Crocker broke a leg a short distance along Blue Range, and was stretchered down into Mainwater Pound to Yadininna (now Idninha) and to the Hawker Hospital, instead.



7. Beckwith May 1947 Hike. From left—Alvin Williams, Colin Hutchesson, Andy Keeves, Ralph 'Bill' Beckwith, with Bonython's 2nd Depot at junction Italowie North & South Branches. Taking photo Doug Stalley. Photo courtesy John S. Keeves

7. In *May 1947*, 'Bill' Beckwith with four University students, Col Hutchesson and Alvin Williams (Adelaide Bushwalkers Club members), Andy Keeves and Doug Stalley (ex-PAC and Kings College Scouts) hiked for 3½ days. They went from

Yankaninna homestead into Mainwater Pound, down the Pound to below Benbonyathe Hill, up on to Blue Range, along it to west of Crocker Saddle, and climbed down into Italowie North Branch, passing by Sheet-Rock Falls. They exited via Italowie Creek to Italowie Gap.

8–9. Three hikes took place simultaneously in *August–September 1947*, two combined for their first few days. For the combined hike Bonython, Dean Harvey, Bob Lewis, Murray Nicholson, and Bill Thomas (Manager Balcanoona Station) were one party. Frank Oakeshott (Rover Leader), Dick Wayte, David Oakeshott, and Bruce Thomson of the 1st Kensington Gardens Rover Crew were the other.



8–9. *Bonython–KG Rovers' 1947 Hike.* From left—Warren Bonython, Bruce Thomson, Dean Harvey, Bill Thomas, Bob Lewis, David Oakeshott. Front—Frank Oakeshott, Murray Nicholson. Taking photo—Dick Wayte. Sunday 24th August, below Yackie Waterhole. Photo Dick Waite Collection Series 0100/1. Courtesy South Australian Scout Archives

From a base camp on Little John Creek (perhaps at Peach Spring) they all checked the approaches to Mt McKinlay, and did an overnight hike to its summit, and as far east as The Breaking Wave.

Then Bonython, Harvey, Lewis, David Oakeshott, Thomas, and Thomson hiked in two days along the South-East Range via Mt Changeweather and Prow Point, and across Mainwater Pound to Snake Gully Bore. From there they drove to Yankaninna homestead. Bill Thomas hiked only this part, too.

Frank Oakeshott, Wayte, and Nicholson made up a support party, who drove Bonython's Jeep to the Bore, and then waited for the others from, it seems, a base camp below Yackie Waterhole. The support party, and Thomas's taking part, were precautions on account of Crocker's accident on the 1946 hike.

Bonython's party then drove to Loch Ness Well, hiked to Bunyip Cranny, and above it to the foot of Nightmare Falls. They also attempted to climb Cleft Peak, but turned back from just short of the summit.

The Kensington Gardens Rovers returned to Yackie, and from there climbed Centre Hill. Then they hiked down the floor of Mainwater Pound to its entrance, climbed up the eastern end of Blue Range, and along

it to Crocker Saddle. They hiked to Mt John Roberts at the southern end of Steadman Ridge, down to Loch Ness Well, and along Balcanoona Creek via Weetootla Gorge to the Balcanoona homestead.

10. The third hike of these was by University students Peter Bateman, Keith Fizelle, Jack Melbourne, and Peter Shaw, members of the 1st Linden Park Rover Crew. They hiked the Gammons for four days, from the Yankaninna homestead over the Station's bridle path to Yackie Waterhole, up on to Blue Range and along it to the Cleft Peak spur. They went down the spur, dropped into Italowie South Branch and hiked along it to its junction with Western Gorge.

From a base camp there they climbed Mt. McKinlay, hiking past Octopus Hill and across Pine Saddle. They returned down Amphitheatre Creek. And they then exited to Italowie Gap down Italowie Creek.

(After, further north from the Old Paralana homestead they climbed Freeling Heights and Mt Painter, and visited the Mt Painter Mining Camp. The Camp was still active after its 2nd World War Australian–British–American work examining the possibility of mining uranium there for nuclear purposes.)



10. *Linden Park Rovers August 1947 Hike.* Three of the four hikers (Peter Bateman, Keith Fizelle, Jack Melbourne, Peter Shaw) on the summit of Mt McKinlay (holding a map?), Tuesday 26th August, 1947. Photo courtesy Peter Bateman

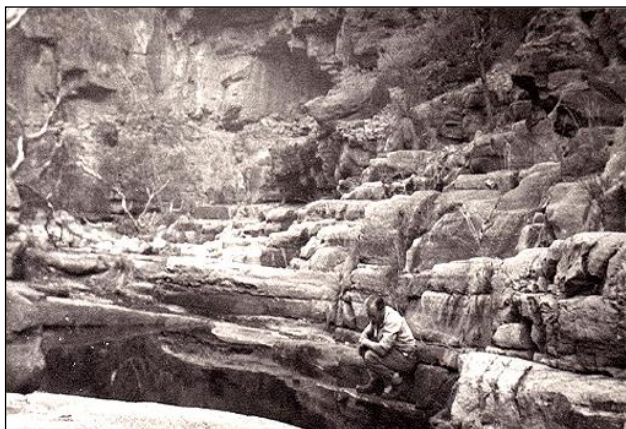
11. In *May 1948* Bonython, Paul and Peter Stops, and Ted White hiked for 2½ days from south of Cleft Peak up Western and Streak Gorges, and across the Central Plateau and Owieandana Basin to the Mt Serle homestead. Bonython renamed Central Plateau the Gammon Plateau and Owieandana Basin Arcoona Pound. (The Plateau was then part of Yankaninna, and had earlier been explored by the Lillecrapps.) Bonython's party, on the look-out for Streak Gorge to their right, surprisingly missed seeing Junction Waterhole in the open on their left.

12. The Adelaide Bushwalkers Club was founded in *October 1946*. And in *May–June 1948*, Arthur

Lincoln 'Lin' Richardson led an ABW twelve-day hike from Yankaninna station to Beltana. The first six days were in the Gammons. With 'Lin' were Lionel Lever, Colin and John Crisp. They made a movie of their hike, and carried a rifle to shoot for meat. They hiked to Yackie Waterhole, up Long Creek on to Blue Range, down into Fern Chasm, and down Terrace Creek to Italowie South Branch.

'Lin' alone climbed Centre Hill. He also got to Rover Rock Hole, naming it Cleft Peak Waterhole (renamed by the St Peter's College Rover Crew in 1954). They climbed Cleft Peak, and then hiked down to the junction of Italowie South Branch and Amphitheatre Creek, climbed up the latter to the ridge top, and then to the Mt McKinlay summit.

They returned and went down to the junction of Italowie North and South Branches, and across to the old Grindell's Hut (the new Hut was built in the 1950s). They crossed the Gibber Plateau, and then hiked down Italowie Creek to Italowie Gap, where a Depot had been dropped off for their next six days.



13. Beckwith August 1948 Hike. John Loutit at Junction Waterhole. One of the party later worked at NASA in the US—I think it was John. Photo courtesy Ralph 'Bill' Beckwith

13. In August 1948, 'Bill' Beckwith and John Loutit, together with University students Colin Hocking and Brian Skinner, hiked from Italowie Gap via Italowie South Branch, Western and Streak Gorges, across Blue Range, and, Beckwith told me, 'fairly directly' to the Yankaninna homestead.

14. In May 1949, the Crisp brothers Colin and John, Lionel Lever and 'Lin' Richardson, all of the ABW, hiked in the Gammons. But I can't find out the route that they followed. Colin later produced a large planimetric map of the Gammons—my copy says in 1953.

15. In August 1949, 'Lin' Richardson with three women, Penelope 'Pen' Simpson, Virginia 'Gin' Howard, and Elizabeth 'Bet' Richardson hiked in the Gammons. 'Lin' and 'Bet' had married earlier that year. They travelled each way by train, and got a ride on a Mines truck to Italowie Gap. But how



15. Not a photo of a Gammons hike—an ABW Bogong High Plains hike instead. But it's here since it shows two of perhaps the first three women to ever hike in the Gammons. From left—'Pen' Simpson, 'Gin' Howard. Photo courtesy Jim Porter

long their hike was I don't know, nor what their route was. 'Pen' Simpson published an article about 'Climbing Cleft Peak' in ABW's November 1949 *Tandanya*, but it gives no clues at all. For the climb they set off from Rover Rock Hole to the saddle at the head of Wildflower Creek, and then up. And they camped for the night on the summit. Photo 15 above is not of Gammons hiking of course, but I wanted to show 'Pen' and 'Gin', two of perhaps the first three women known to hike in the Gammons.

A Famous Photo



THIS PHOTO of the Bob Crocker Rescue, Friday 2nd August 1946, one of the best-known of the Gammons, was published around the country. It was front page of Adelaide's *The Advertiser* on 6th August. Keith Lillecrapp front and Fred McKenzie back are carrying the stretcher on the way down into Mainwater Pound. You can see why newspapers used it, since the terrain they're negotiating is so sensationally steep. Photo courtesy Gordon Lillecrapp. ■

Notes

❶ All photos *and* the text in this article are copyright, and may not be used elsewhere without permission from their named owners, or if dead, their descendants. The hike numbers match the photo numbers.

❷ Many Gammons places have several names. Eg., Blue Range (Mawson name) has been Benbonyatha Range; Black Range complementing White Range against which Grindell's Hut nestles; Main Range; Benbonyathe Divide; Gammon Divide; and between Prow Point and Arcoona Bluff, the North-West Range. Different spellings also exist, eg Angipena for Angepena; and Binbenbonyathe and Ben Bonyathe for Benbonyathe. Illawortina was an early spelling of Illinawortina. The name for today's East Painter Camp was Mt Painter Camp in 1947.

❸ You may not recognise some place names.

Western Gorge runs from Italowie South Branch at GR 183266 to 145284. Streak Gorge joins it at Junction Waterhole. Sheet-Rock Falls are in the western part of the Italowie North Branch, at GR 196306. You climb Nightmare Falls into Bunyip Chasm from just above Bunyip Cranny—some hikers wrongly think the 'Chasm' is only another name for the 'Cranny'. The name Fern Gorge was often used early for Bunyip Cranny because ferns sometimes grew there too, but finally the name 'moved' permanently to the present Fern Chasm.

Cleft Peak Spur joins Blue Range at the 991 metre hill at GR 184308. Many confuse (*and* mispronounce) Mt McKinlay in the Gammons with Mt McKinley in Alaska. 'Big' John McKinlay was a local—Big John and Little John Creeks are also named after him. Other names often mispronounced are Paralana, pronounced 'Pralna'; Yadininna, pronounced 'Eedaninna'. And Yackie is sometimes pronounced as 'Yackeye', but should be 'Yackee'. Old-time miners told me Yudnamutana *should* be pronounced 'Yoodnamutna', shortened locally to 'Yooda'. Both those seem to have vanished now.

Those are only a few points. Grid references are to the 1:50,000 *Illinawortina* Topographic Sheet.

❹ Beliefs by hikers in the 1940s to the 1970s that the Gammons had never been explored, and newspaper articles that also claimed this, were incorrect. And they surprised local people who knew those Ranges well, and even went walking, riding, and picnicking in them.

The 400 men at the 1899–1900 Worturpa Goldfields were mentioned above. Prospectors combed all the Gammon Ranges, and continued to do so up to the time of the 1940s hikes described here. For example, the 1st Linden Park Rovers on

their way to their *August 1948* Gammons Hike met two prospectors at Owieandana Hut. They had been rescued from inside the Gammons by a Yankaninna party, which also just happened to be walking *in* the Gammons by chance at that very time.

Harry Hemming, an ex-First World War Soldier, lived the rest of his life after it on the Worturpa Goldfield. He walked *across* the Ranges to Angepena fortnightly to get his pension and rations. Nearly blind when older, he fell to his death over a cliff. His body was found by Indigenous Trackers. (Mt. Hemming south-east of Beltana is named after him.)

Fanciful newspaper articles in the 1940s made the Gammons seem a dangerous place to hike in. A 1948 article, 'Grim Gammon Ranges', says: 'Only the outer fringe of these inscrutable, densely scrub-covered quartzite ridges, with practically unscaleable cliff faces, has been penetrated by white men.' A photo with the article shows climbers ascending one such cliff on Scree Hill (Mt McKinlay Bluff). Such silly newspaper sensationalism was boosted when the overloaded Bob Crocker broke his leg.

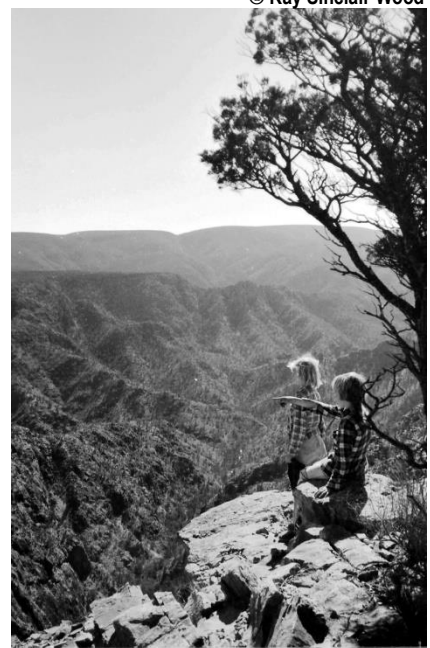
And the belief that Indigenes never went into the Gammons has you wonder. Gordon Lillecrapp says those working on Yankaninna told them about Yackie Waterhole—their name for it. So if they never went into the Ranges, how did they *know* about it and *name* it in the first place? You also have to wonder about the Indigenous rock paintings in the heart of the Gammons (they show emu tracks and lizards). I have colour slides of them.

Reg Sprigg puts all of this into a much more realistic perspective when he says: 'Claims by later geographers that it [the Gammons] had rarely, if ever, been penetrated and explored

© Ray Sinclair-Wood

was, of course, headline-seeking rubbish'.

And the belief the Gammons are so dangerous looks silly when you see the photo here, of two 11-year-old boys on top of Cleft Peak, 31st August 1978, Day 4 of an 8-day hike, zipping all over the Gammons with scarcely any trouble at all. ■



BALCANOONA RE-VEGETATION REPORT – 17-24th JUNE.

By Roger Mathers

The Friends with Ranger Sian.

Photo Richard Smith



Sian, Janet, Paul, Roger, Wayne, Libby, Richard, Marg, Lynne & Bill

Volunteer and Ranger Engagement

An enjoyable, productive & safe trip was had by Lynne & Bill, Jan & Paul, Libby & Wayne, Marg & Richard, and Roger. 104 plants propagated by Marg, Lynne, Barbara and Roger were brought up to Balcanoona; all were planted out, some as replacements, most as new plantings.



Sian spend several days with us working on plant layout in the Mound area and in Area 3 near the old SQ area, relocating an outdoor table and chair set to the Mound, digging many holes with the backhoe, and gathering some native plant cuttings for planting out. Sian also updated us on the plans and developments relating to the local ridge walk.

Dave Phillips arrived on the last day and gave his strong support to the re-veg program and encouraged us to identify any short falls in our re-veg resources and submit a funding request to Sian for payment.

The plantings were largely carried out during the first four days leaving valuable time for some local walks, planting some cuttings, seed collection, tidying up, stock take and propagation planning for next trips.

One afternoon we met with the ecologists involved with the quoll and phascogale release program who shared their progress and experiences to date and showed us two young phascogales housed in a small tent in their lounge room. **(Photo: - above of a phascogale about to have a transmitter collar connected – R Brandle)**

Activities Undertaken

Maintenance: All plants in all areas were checked, re-mounded as needed, lines flushed out and drippers checked and adjusted.

Area 1, including BBQ area: 12 plants replaced, 38 new plantings.

Area 2: 20 plants were replaced.

Area 3: A small grove of 5 Yundu (Gum-barked Coolabah) were planted out with new holes and irrigation south of the old SQ concrete slab opposite the visitor's facilities. 9 seedlings (Madla and Yundu) were planted out near the creek east of the Mound area using new holes and irrigation.

Many holes were staked out for Sian to dig at a later time.

In order that the old historic SQ remains visible from the road and visitor's area, Sian proposes that our new plantings be limited to shrubs of low height such as Sennas, Cassias, Ruby Salt Bush and Balcanoona Wattle with its low leaf density.



River Red Gum

Mound Area: Making a start to the bush-tucker focus for this area, 19 Iga (native orange) and Matu (native apricot) were planted out, using holes dug east of the old telegraph pole. As the new 25mm irrigation system has yet to be set out for this area, a temporary connection was made to the Area 3 irrigation system.

Carpark and Office Areas: 4 plants have died in the raised section east of the carpark. Compared to other areas where plants were planted at the same time, their progress has been relatively poor. The sandy soil in the raised section came from Lake Frome and appears not to be ideal for the new plantings. The larger established eucalypts in this section are well advanced and appear to have penetrated the top soil. **(Photo left)** It is proposed that new or replaced plantings in this area will need a deep hole to be dug and 'good' soil brought in.



Curly Mallee

Area 4: Our plan is plant out an area parallel to the entry road about 25m in. This area was briefly surveyed this trip & found to contain a valuable number of species planted out earlier by Lindsay & Nadine Brown.

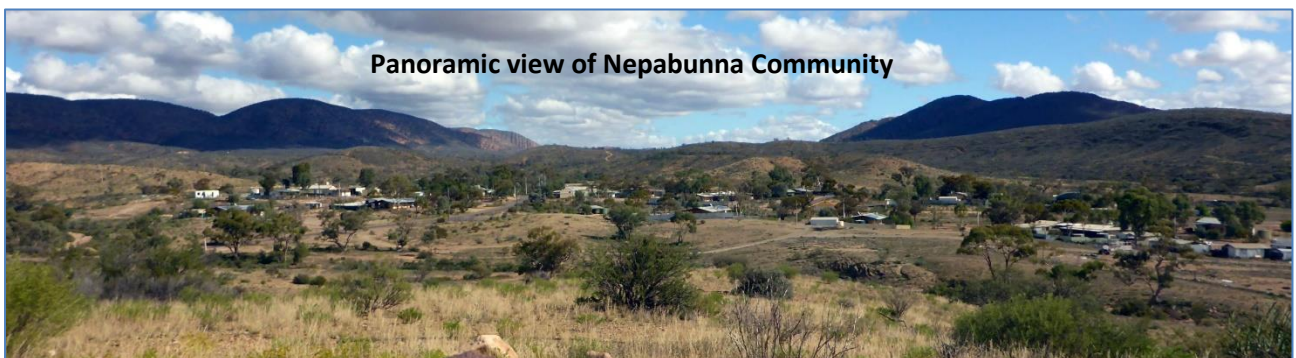
Storage Shed: General reorganisation and tidy-up undertaken and stocktake completed. Shortfall items identified to be costed and submitted to Sian for payment.

Seed Collection:

Marg collected Sturt Desert Rose/wilvilvi, Native Pine vinba, Desert Paperbark/arladu, Bush Plum/manawarra, Italowie Senna.. maybe Blunt Leaf Cassia, Native Cherry and Native Orange/Iga. Lynne and Marg collected a wattle in Italowie Gorge which may be Sandhills Wattle. Roger collected from Sennas, Cassias and Native Plum, and cuttings from water bush.

Photos of Wira and Manduwarra by Roger Mathers.

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Panoramic view of Nepabunna Community



The Re-Veg Team at Work
Phil, Shauna, Janet, Amanda (hidden), Jill and Mark

