

# Friends of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park

## NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2017



### Activities proposed to commence in 2017

During 2016 the Friends committee in worked with Allan Harbour (Ranger in Charge – Ranges District) to seek approval to several projects by the V-GRNP Co-Management Board. The CMB gave the approval for us to proceed with them at their October meeting.

These projects are:

- **Environmental monitoring in Weetootla Gorge**
- **Refurbishment of the original Balcanoona Homestead and Oocaboolina Hut**
- **Establishment of a digital database for the Park**

Participation in these projects will be on the basis of people meeting their own expenses in getting to and from the park. For each working visit to the park the Friends group will be applying, beforehand, for free accommodation during the park stay.

Of the projects listed the one likely to get underway first is environmental monitoring in Weetootla Gorge. Some details of what this project will involve are provided below.



#### **Environmental monitoring in Weetootla Gorge - Convener, Ray Hickman.**

Weetootla Gorge is one of very few places, perhaps the only place, in the ranges where water flows more or less permanently and over some distance. An endangered fish, the purple spotted gudgeon, lives in the water. Marked walking trails allow people to walk into the area from Weetootla camping ground and Grindell's Hut. In 2012, surveys of the Weetootla and Balcanoona creeks the quality of the environment was assessed as good but not as good as had been expected.

The elements of the monitoring program include:

- Measurement of water temperature, pH (acidity) and electrical conductivity (salinity) in the pools of water fed by the Weetootla and Nepourie springs.
- Estimation of fish numbers and size.
- Survey of aquatic macroinvertebrates (water bugs) in the pools inhabited by fish.
- Recording of frog sounds.
- Sightings and locations of significant weeds.
- Impact of browsing by goats and other herbivores on native plants.
- Establishment of a photographic record at selected points of interest.



There is already a small group of people who will be able to get this project going but more are needed. The group has a capacity to provide training to people joining it and by this means hopes to ensure the viability of the project over the long term.

It is intended that two visits per year will be made to the park with each visit involving 2/3 days of work on site. Most monitoring will be done at locations 1-2 hours walking time from a vehicle. The Weetootla Hike Brochure and Map (here is the link) <http://www.rayh.id.au/vulkathunha/documents/weetootla-hike-brochure-1.pdf> describes the walking access to Weetootla

Spring, near where most of the monitoring will be done, from points where vehicles can be left. If you are a group member interested in getting involved with this project you should contact the convener, Ray Hickman, using – [raywen@bigpond.net.au](mailto:raywen@bigpond.net.au)

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership of the Friends group is open to any person with an interest in the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park for small fee of \$10.00 (per person or family) for a 12 month period from 1<sup>st</sup> July. Members will be invited to participate in activities proposed by the group. If you are interested in our group or wish renew membership please post your cheque payable to "Friends of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park" to Friends of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park c/- 20 Hillridge Drive Belair SA 5052 or follow this link to our website :- <http://www.rayh.id.au/vulkathunha/secondary/howtojoin.html>

### **Old Balcanoona Homestead**



This two room building is situated within the Park Headquarters and has recently been cleaned and partially renovated. In time it is hoped to be developed into a small museum with one room to replicate the living conditions of a century ago whilst the other to house items of interest associated with the park.



View of Mt McKinley and Bluff with Grindell's Hut in the lower foreground



### Oocaboolina Outstation



This historic outstation in the original pastoral lease of Balcanoona is situated a few kilometres east of Nepabunna on the road to Arkaroola and the park headquarters at Balcanoona.

Oocaboolina has been partially restored to the extent that it has been re-roofed and made secure by iron bars to the windows. Later this year it is hoped that an initial visit to the site by some of the friends group along with the Ranger and other DEWNR personnel to prepare a work schedule. Later after this visit we will be asking you if you would like to be involved in the infrastructure renovation of this and the Old Balcanoona homestead.



Above – two photos of the rooms at the outstation, solid but in need of some TLC.

Below – signage on roadside and entry to outstation, and two exterior views of the building



### **Digital Database**

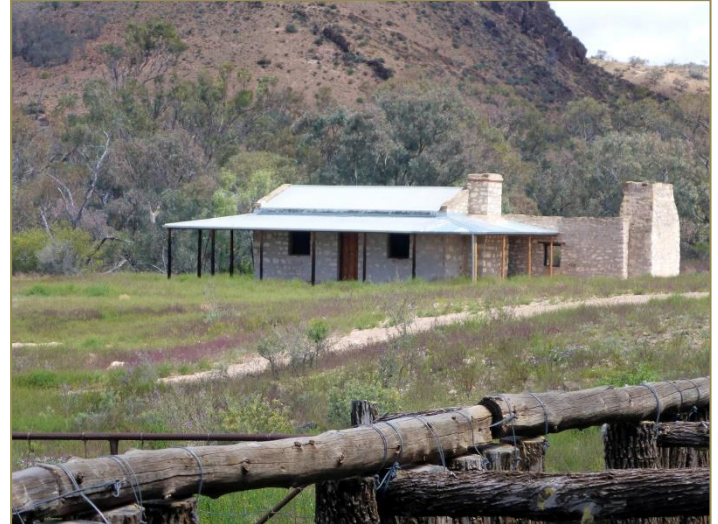
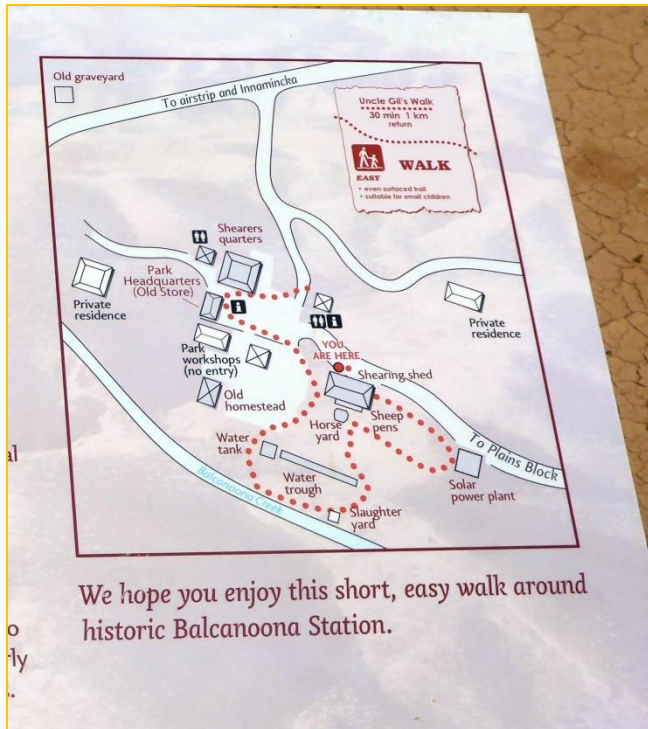
Ranger Allan is very keen to have us to establish a digital database of the park. This is intended to include all kinds of information about the park, its natural history, aboriginal culture, pastoral and mining information etc. The Friends of Ikara-Flinders national park have kindly agreed to show us their digital database and arrangements are in hand to visit their colleague who handles the database.



## BALCANOONA INFRASTRUCTURE

The plan at left indicates the general layout of the infrastructure at Balcanoona – north to top of map.

Below is the “Old Homestead” as seen from the back of the Shearing Shed.



Two views of the shearing shed – exterior and interior. This has largely been restored by the Central Hills 4WD Club who have some minor work to complete over the next 12 months.



The interior of the Old Homestead comprises two rooms – the larger is the kitchen & living room (left) and the other is a bedroom (centre). These are the two rooms that maybe a future museum. At the rear is an area of concrete which may have been a kitchen. (right)





**Below from left to right – Old Homestead, workshop and garaging and office and reception parking**



**Below left – a view of the Shearer's Quarters accommodation block, right is a BBQ, outdoor eating area and a toilet block.**



**Below left, spacious kitchen facilities, centre, large dining and living area and right, protected bunk rooms.**



**Below left, day visitor facilities with shower, toilets and information board. Right the office and reception.**

