

"You're the Guy with Parkinson's"

A POETIC JOURNEY
THROUGH SOUTH AUSTRALIA



BY WILL BOAG

Day 1 – Hahndorf

Well, we're here in Hahndorf, with its interesting beginnings. We came here because there were hills to climb, nearly 200 years previously, 38 families of Lutheran immigrants came here because they wanted to simply make a life for themselves through farming. They were escaping religious persecution in the Silesian area of Prussia. These hard working refugees formed the backbone of this new town and named it Hahndorf in honour of the captain of the ship - Captain Hahn, who supported them in reaching their enterprising efforts, and goals. They were joined soon after by another 14 families, who had earlier settled nearby.

In 1885 a transformation came to the main street. With a history of 'firsts' another was to come in the form of a huge tree planting program, the first public program of its kind in the state. Reminiscent of Europe, 300 chestnut, cork, elm and plane trees were planted creating a glorious tunnel of trees for the excited visitors to this prosperous and ever changing village. So, no, it was not named after a mythical town in Bavaria but of a captain of their ship who brought them not only a new life but probably saved their lives in the process.

What gives the town a decidedly German look and feel besides typical German shops and beer, are the many original buildings with the traditional German architecture. These are fachwerk houses, slope-roofed dwellings made from layers of limestone and oak. First built during the 11th century, they are examples of the oldest architectural style in central Europe.

Regional differences in fachwerk range from the patterning of the wood beams to the type of shingles on roofs. But because the buildings were all hand-constructed by artisans, even neighbouring fachwerk houses differ in varying details. Fachwerk houses were all built a little crooked and a little slanted while modern buildings just don't have the same charm.

Too late to walk today but I will make that up by adding kilometres to other days ahead. Fortunately we brought a present from a very good friend: 'Walks in the Adelaide Hills'. Thanks Larissa, the information office did not have any material about those walks. However, one of the staff and a traveller who had walked the hills, offered their personal thoughts and feelings of the tracks. Very frankly, they both told me what tracks to walk and what not to, as she separated the newly tarred human highways from the more difficult and remote ones, which I choose, to challenge my 'Parkinsons'.

Cultures within Cultures



Hahndorf

You could be in a small, quaint German town
Except that it is not in Germany,
Instead it still belongs to England's crown
And English people there are very many.
But German music dominates the street
Instilling taste of beer and words of song,
And then there is the famous German meat
All ensuring nothing can go wrong.
100 year old trees of elm and plane
Grace Australia's oldest German village,
Hans Heysen is its biggest claim to fame
Providing Hahndorf with its cultural image.
This pretty town in the hills of Adelaide,
A little taste of Europe, here replayed.

Day 2 – Hallett Cove Walk

I walked in to the tourist office..... I thought, and was surprised they had no maps, or information about walks in the area, so I pulled out a book of walks that were in the book I mentioned in Day 1's post. They were impressed, so I asked if I could go through these walks with them. I was still concerned at their apparent disinterest in me or my topic seeing this was her job, however, she did know of the fifteen walks I showed her.

After fifteen minutes, I thanked her, and asked if she wanted a copy as a resource. She politely declined. I was curious how they just sat there, as though this wasn't their job, to answer questions on their famous local town. One of the women told me she knew nothing about these walks, while she was very impressed with her friend. I walked out only a little more knowledgeable, but quite bemused at their behaviour.

The next day we drove to our walk start and managed quite easily with the 11km circuit up and down many hundreds of cliff stairs. The outstanding glacial pavements along the northern cliff tops are recognised as the best record of Permian glaciation in Australia and have international significance. The rain stopped well before we got there, leaving us with a moderate summer like day.

The clear reflections of greens and blues delighted us with their rocky home below which spread out fifty metres into the sea. These rocks are the remains of a long gone Ice-age, so lots of very cold geological history here. The 150 step sugarloaf mountain showed evidence of material going back 600 million years, and we thought we were getting old. Recently I met a rock climber, so I couldn't help myself as I looked for weak sandstone and strong ironstone wondering how he would go climbing these ancient cliffs? The outstanding glacial pavements along the northern cliff tops are recognised as the best record of Permian glaciation in Australia and have international significance.

On return, I reached my now daily 20km goal. Soon after, I visited the information office again, and asked another woman who also knew nothing about the walks. But she did help me, by getting the information office next door, to open. The 'information office' I had now visited twice, was the art gallery. I should have got the full picture the first time, alas, I think I was framed. Aboriginal settlement of the Hallett Cove area is among the earliest documented in Australia. Archaeological evidence of 1700 large stone tools near the coast shows the presence of the Kartan people of Kangaroo Island, 40,000 years ago.

The expert is not always the best person to ask for advice



Stairway

There's a stairway to heaven some would say
But there are questions I would need to ask,
Where does it start and can you lose the way
And whose the one that frees me from the cask.
Is it just one way and do you reach
That precious goal that many yearn for still,
Is it innate or something you can teach
Is it for all or does it need strong will.
How will we know if we are eligible
Or if we'll see our partner one more time,
I've heard it's hard if you get into trouble
If you commit a bloody heinous crime.
How will we know it's just another staircase,
Or will we know the one we must embrace?

Day 3 – Mt Lofty south

We walked the southern Mt Lofty Range this morning – up it, down it, and around it, on home made paths, on gravel ones, stony, wide and steep narrow ones with sheer drops. We both felt dizzy for awhile, not a good place to have those feelings so stopped for some protein and water. This experience took me back to Switzerland and our four-hour non stop climb where I fainted twice with low blood pressure, and what I did not know at the time, I found out later, was that I also had a heart condition - atrial fibrillation. After four hours of continual varying heart beats we staggered the extra steep last kilometre to the top.

As you can see a pattern is emerging. We walk most of our kilometres in the morning, then back to town for a late lunch, then another walk, a stroll round town (with the distance depending on how far away I was from achieving my 20km goal) and home by dark. My afternoon walk today took me to the home and studio of Hans Heysen, the Australian artist, born in Germany but who lived here in South Australia.

He quickly earned a reputation for his art, with an extraordinary ability to paint our Australian gumtree. He seemed able to catch the very essence of this native gem that literally covers most of Australia. Corrie and I became very fond of this tree on our NSW river journey last year. I was excited when I found out about Hans' love for them also, so my 5km round walk to his house after a windy day, was a breeze.

It was also a chance to find a eucalyptus branch on one of Hans's gumtrees where I could hang my theraband to do my strength work. I need to do this for just one of these exercises because there is nowhere usually to hang it from inside. I am also thinking seriously about doing the reverse and hanging one of his gumtrees on our wall in Balmain.

There's a walking track in front of Hans' home and it's called the Heysen Trail. It runs for 1200kms, starts in Cape Jervis and ends in the Parachilna Gorge in the Flinders Ranges. I would love to do this walk but lodges are too irregular along the way and we don't camp, so I will have to be content with just crossing it several times a day.

Heysen was a conservationist far ahead of his time. He fought to preserve the flora of the Adelaide Hills—particularly the great red gums and white gums—and repeatedly warned of the dangers of destroying the natural environment. James Stuart MacDonald said drawings were packed with a Virgilian wisdom, the simpler and higher awareness of the meaning of the soil and all its progeny and products: halcyon days, foul weather, thunder, and rain-laden clouds, and winds made visible'.

If we slept like a koala we would have no time to do the damage we do



Hans Heysen

No fantasy surrounds this modest artist
Drawing gums was most of his creating,
His brilliance as a genius watercolorist
Revolutionising Aussie landscape painting.
Rooted to earth as was his mighty gumtree
While art those days was wafting in the air,
For Hans, his works, full of integrity
Was down to earth, for this he had a flair.
He loved the play of light in trunk and branch
The peaks and gorges under clear bright skies,
Fulfilling this he gave himself carte blanche
Painting shadows in full sun there were no lies.
Hans Heysen's earthly wisdom made him great,
Australia's beauty, did he illuminate.

Day 4 – Morialta Gorge

Superb. It was a gorge, but a lot more as well. The Conservation Park calls it a gorge but I would call it absolutely gorgeous. As usual in these parks there are paths going everywhere, and at times it is difficult to translate the signs into good directions, but it works. So many times we have thought our decisions and their directions were not so good, but each time something better came from them. It's been like that in my life mostly, while at times I have repeated bad decisions, I am learning, (never too old) and have received rewards despite them.

Once again, but more this time, we edged around mountain sides. We had made a pact, because we're old, to always pass oncoming walkers on the inside. This meant there was a much greater chance we would more likely stay alive in these mountains, and therefore die miserably in an aged care facility.

But I digress. Two koalas had originally met us at the carpark but had heard about us humans, as their greetings came from the very highest branches. They like to sleep and that is mostly what they did during our four hours of walking. Four waterfalls took us on different paths, their floating waters bouncing off the pools, while below, caves surrounded by vibrant orange rocks looked out on them, as grass trees of many shapes edged those previous paths.

We got a little lost and asked a young woman where we were. Thinking this question could be a sign of an elderly illness she helped us, but then said, as she went on a small diversion, that she would catch us later. The challenge was not taken, and to hide this particular illness, we were never caught. The cliff faces looked like a construction of large stone blocks leaning at precarious angles ready at any time to deblock themselves. The gorges were close and tall, the rocks in them were colourful and diverse, while the thousands of glorious grass trees left no doubt in what country we were hiking. It was stunning.

As we left, two other koalas thanked us for coming, by shuffling a little, way high up in one of Heysen's stunning gum trees. There are over 700 species of these gums in Australia and fall under the following species: Eucalypt, Corymbia and Angophora. Common names amongst these types are: The 'manna' which is the 'koala tree'. Although, in our region, koalas also eat Blue Gum, Grey Gum, Swamp Gum, Brooker's Gum and Red Gum. In the Adelaide Hills you can add the Long-Leaved Box and Brown Stringy Bark. Whatever the tree, koalas are picky eaters and eat sparingly, thus allowing room for more at the dining table.

Koalas are one of few that eat their own homes



A Koala Diet

The leaves of gums are what koalas prefer
The ringtail possum and the greater glider,
All three are dressed alike in greyish fur
A baby when it's born goes back inside her.
Poison is their specially chosen diet
It comes from certain eucalyptus leaves,
Nocturnal so they mostly eat at night
By day you see them sleeping in the trees.
The koala has a smooth and smallish brain
Refuses to eat leaves taken off their gum,
They don't know why they get wet in the rain
Maybe it's cause too soon they left their mum.
But cute and cuddly there's no better beast,
Who cares if poison's crucial, when they feast.

Day 5 – Anstey Hill

My usual early morning walk, but a dark start as our destinations become further and further away ie, the locations where the walks begin. Anstey Hill is a range of hills that offer numerous walking options, though it has simpler facilities than the others. The first path we walked today was towards the ridge. It was a two kilometre challenging ‘Swiss-like climb’ that wound its rather wide gravel path up to a lesser challenge as we walked along the ‘ridge top’ path. We climb every day at home so we don’t hear too many complaints from our bodies, but groin and glutes are suffering a little, quietly.

The payoff though was superb views over the Adelaide Plains, wildlife and Newmans Nursery. This very busy and productive nineteenth century nursery run by engaging and enthusiastic volunteers showed interesting glimpses from the past with its heated glasshouses while also being the largest nursery in the southern hemisphere. However it never recovered from a devastating flood in 1912. It seemed fate was not on its side for in 1983 what remained was destroyed by the ‘Ash Wednesday’ bushfires. However not all was lost for in the meantime work was being done to set up another nursery in 1925 which still operates today.

Too hard to resist was more of a sharp ‘Himalayan climb’ but without ropes, called ‘Torture Hill’. Because the other walkers look at us and think – ‘what are they doing here’, my retiring ego needs to respond. It was especially rewarding when our audience gasped: ‘you’re not coming down as well, are you? I missed an opportunity with my PD sign but it was ‘finger-hurting cold’, so next time it will go over my jumper. Ironically, Torture Hill has witnessed a few attacks over the years, and maybe just maybe they are exhausted after such a climb that they become very vulnerable and easy prey for sick human beings.

We get to meet lots of walkers because we use them when we are in trouble (lost, that is), and greet others if they’re not pretending they didn’t see us, and we greet lots of dogs because they never pretend.

On the way home from our ‘free of any amenities conservation park’ (a good thing), we even pulled off a busy highway to ask a man carrying a cup of coffee, where we could get a good coffee. He thought this very funny, and of course it had to be the best brew in town. Reflecting on coffee venues, we just heard that a popular coffee haunt had recently been frequented by a Covid carrying person. A day or two before, we had been there, so glad we missed greeting that guy.

Food keeps us alive, but it can also end it



Coffee

Where e'er you go the drug of choice is coffee
At breakfast it's the staple of the day,
Keeps you alert and boosts your energy
And burns your fat, so nice and slim you'll stay.
Reducers risk of stroke and deadly cancers
And Parkinsons is rarer so it's said,
It's bitter, but it's sweet with all the answers
And with it there is less chance you'll be dead.
The quality however must be best
Otherwise no sleep and restlessness,
But then too much will soon put you to rest
And if you're pregnant it may threaten us.
The biggest issue is environmental,
Cause land is cleared - it's highly detrimental.

Day 6 - Black Hill

Another glorious walking day in South Australia. Cool but sunny with clouds coming and going and so far it has rained nearly every night, stopping at 0600 just before my early walk. I called in to the grumpy baker, not open, and not happy, but he opened anyway to sell me a croissant, a present for Corrie whom I kept awake last night with my 'hots and colds'.

Black Hill (not named as such because of the bushfires) was still black from last year's fires, with the grass trees making use of the excess water they store up for occasions like this one. They are clever trees and seem to be the personification of the real world, where life and death hang so vulnerably before us all. There is a reason though why it is called 'Black Hill'. The hills feature is the Sheoak tree which gives it its name. The trees foliage matures to a dark rusty, almost black colour as summer progresses so as you look from the Adelaide Plains, the hill appears to be black.

All our walks have been quite different: varied in length oscillating loosely around the 10-15 km mark, and path types have changed more than I thought they could. Some were out and return, others a circuit. Today's walk was a circuit, commencing with an hour long climb to the summit over boulders (very carefully!). It was rough and raw and we marvelled at the grass tree led recovery and surrounding bush growth.

We came upon some people our age who were planting new bushes and plants, who gave us directions on where to walk. Unusual plant talk came in the form of 'notes', such as for leaves: "I am hardy so I'll protect the soil below me", and other educational phrases said like humans in the first person.

They also gave us some verbal notes. We are in the habit of asking for challenging paths so they directed us accordingly, sending us off on narrow paths, paths with loose rocks, around cliff faces and through magnificent Ghost Gum forests.

Then along came Guy. He was shaking his head strongly as though already disagreeing with what we might say. As he shook, he smiled; his legs were lifted high as in a PD warm up exercise, albeit at peculiar angles, and some words were a little difficult to decipher. Guy had been born with Cerebral Palsy and every weekend he would walk the most difficult paths he could find; we were lucky to find him on this one. He soon left with these very slowly enunciated and profound parting words: "this is our life, you don't get a second go".

“This is our only life, you don’t get a second go”



The Grass Tree

It epitomises the Australian land
In its ability to live at all,
With nutrients as rich as river sand
And raging fires where death can quickly call.
But fires don't scare this hardy little tree
Cause insulating leaves keep it alive,
And flowers on its spike live happily
Knowing that a fire will make it thrive.
Just like Koalas, this tree has a very poor diet
But 'cause it has a structural adaptation,
The fire's ash ensures there's no disquiet
Adding to this flowers' determination.
Inspiring is a word that comes to mind,
When talking of this tree - one of a kind.

Day 7 – Warren Conservation Park

This was classed as a hard walk but the hardest thing was finding it. We had many helpers: the GPS woman (very kind); shop owners ('what about asking the tourist office'); people on the zebra crossing "maaaate, what are you doing; people in parked cars – thought I was booking them – prior to meds; forcing a car off the road – (nah, but thought about it) and the 'Info Office' – not open; oh, and a girl in her home minding her own business – 'up around the corner' ... and there it was!

It was a little hard... but beautifully hard. There were newsworthy winds and they were in a hurry to take us along in case we changed our minds, and continued until we lost them behind the mountain. On the way we climbed narrow paths, with lots of corners, I love corners. There were colourful variegated rocks for your feng shui garden; two metre high native grasses (this has me worried about what I have planted in my small garden); large boulders and tea trees; mostly on steep terrain. We were told it would rain at 2.00.

We're used to Sydney whose weather predictions are mostly accurate, but in SA, the jury has yet to return. What did arrive in its place was a sandstorm. It came up on one side along a mountain ridge and then the other side as we walked across rare open ground, now with our masks on. We don't like sand or dust, it blocks most things Corrie has to block, and I put mine on when I see anything that looks remotely like smoke after my cardiologist said my heart was fibrillating.

After three hours it was time for a long drive to our new home at Port Pirie. We drove through beautiful country, it was rather like a luxurious walk as we were carried through Heysen country. It was the first time we had spent so much time on the Heysen trail, making it extra special. This brings me to another goal, which is to cover half the distance of this trail in our 30 days of hill walks, and that is: 600 kms.

As we drove and 'the wonder of colourful corners' gave way to 'too much flat and straight', the rains we were expecting on our walk arrived on one side, and dust on the other, until the dust appeared to rock the car, with small bushes bouncing around us. We quickly grabbed our masks before realising that we were in a sealed car, and then put them back in case we looked as silly as the other guy did.

A long discovery walk of Port Pirie ended the night, and yes, the info girl, Kylie, left tomorrow's agenda in her mail box for us. And, I've changed my attitude towards 'Info Offices', thanks to Kylie who has renewed my faith: 'If you can't make the time, make a phone call'.

Have you turned the corner yet?



The Corner

Those corners are the change points in our life
We're careful when the straight road makes a turn,
The straight and narrow keeps us out of strife
But often it's a corner that we yearn.
Corners bring about a new direction
A mystery maybe, or a welcome change,
Is this a time for needed self reflection
Or time to take some stock and rearrange?
A corner also can be a disruption
Especially if your life is going well,
No need for us to search for an eruption
There really is no noise we need to quell.
Without these corners roadblocks soon appear,
So they are there, to alleviate our fear.

Day 8 – Mt Remarkable

The polar air mass was the reason my fingers and ears were hurting so much on my morning walk. South Australia as a whole was getting these massive cold winds and rumour had it that we would get snow on Mount Remarkable, but we didn't. This mass goes by the name of 'modified polar maritime'. It is a very cold, moist and unstable air mass that arises in the Southern Ocean on the margin of the Antarctic and often brings snow and hail.

Did I tell you I don't like edges as much as corners because you can always see where you could end up if you slip off an edge, whereas a corner is a safe surprise? So, we edged up the side of Mt Remarkable. These edges weren't so scary but the rain and the winds made them so, as wet edges can be scary.

It was a delightful walk, round lots of corners and I was certainly not disappointed. I have never seen so many delightful grass trees but they were very healthy, most with those glorious looking centre spikes decorated with small white flowers that are responsible for a grass tree's birth. There was evidence of a recent fire, but grass trees are defiant and usually multiply following these otherwise disastrous events. If there's a grass tree heaven – this was it.

The edge slowly became steeper, but wider, my PD balance now wasn't such a burden, and I could concentrate more on what was about me. Where the mountain found its concave self, I think the walls had eroded and they were uniquely repaired. It was confusing. It could've been that tonnes of rocks of mostly 100ml diameter had been tipped, or air dropped, until the erosion had disappeared. On the other hand this could have been a natural rock slide. These areas averaged around 40 metres in width and 150 metres in height, and there were 'heaps' of them, making them quite difficult to cross.

As usual there were the ubiquitous gums and interestingly enough the corners' edges seemed to be the home of the most huge and glorious ones. Once on top of this gum and grass tree mountain, there was an iciness in the air and we thought there may be some snow, but it wasn't meant to be. For a short while we had a vital decision to make. We were told we could keep going initially down a fire trail but we weren't certain. So if we did start back on this track and we got it wrong we would be stuck in the dark and the cold. So it was back the same way where we encountered a light covering of tiny hail stones so my usual downhill rock hopping turned into a mindful stepping crawl.

Have you been on the edge?



On the Edge

If you've been on edge then you will know
It's not a feeling that will make you laugh,
Some times emotions may not even show
While others cop the brunt on your behalf.
If you've been on the edge, you could be mad
Irrational or thinking revolution,
It's something that could make you very sad
And there's not always a right and just solution.
But then you walk a narrow gravelly edge
Where looking down is all it often takes,
To lose your footing, falling from the ledge
Worst case is death, the best, you keep the shakes.
So if your edge is also on a bend,
Adrenaline is what your brain will send.

Day 9 – Sugar Gum Hike – Mambray Creek

My polar walks still continue as do my town circuits. Besides the superb disused railway station, the post office, and an old glorious pub, I also walked past a church – the Uniting. These days people there pray about a tasty calamari, for it is now Spirou's Seafood and Salad Bar. The owners were criticised earlier on for desecrating this church until they discovered that Spirou had saved it from being demolished – now they are valued customers and go to this seafood church much more often than they did before.

Mambray Creek offered us a choice so we took the Sugar Gum route. This tree is mostly recognised by a sniff of its foliage and grows mostly in the higher regions. We were admiring a perfectly dead gum tree that had fallen not only in the shape of a bridge, but at a perfect length. Kookaburra parents and babies flew in to take a look. They gathered round and all began to mock the wooden bridge, with some of the loudest and most varied laughs I had ever heard.

This route initially followed a creek, under 'Dead Tree Bridge', where just before, Corrie spent some time talking to a tame young Kangaroo (there were many about). A simple creek walk but a busy one, as we passed walkers on their own; one group with friends; an older man (twice); a group of noisy kids, some with very loud voices, and a young couple who hurried back when the rain started. It wasn't heavy and seemed unusual but – they had left their tent open!!!

This simple walk soon began a very steep one for some distance until we saw our unmarked lookout facing (Sorry, I didn't tell you) a cliff side of mostly orange blocks of rocks over 800 million years old. I suddenly felt very young. Because the lookout was unmarked I walked to a corner but the rise had ended so we started back down.

I 'sort of' cross country ski with my poles protecting my knees as I throw one pole out in front of me into the dirt, pulling myself down as I swung the other pole ready to grab its hold (the same method poling up) as taught to me by Corrie. I see so many people unable to enjoy even simple walking because of damaged knees so I go out of my way to use precautionary measures just in case.

A short drive to Quorn, (a seemingly quiet country town) that takes us ever closer to the Flinders, is our home for the night. From here we are close to some exciting hikes for the next five days while we keep a careful eye on accommodation, (hard to get – but I remind you all, I have booking.com's genius of the year travelling with me).

Hans Heysen at his best



Holy Fish

It's easy to discover delicious food
Or what to eat if you've got weight to lose,
Diets range from excellent to crude
While cafes have a menu - you can choose.
Then there is the food that's spiritual
A favourite holy text that is sublime,
An instant taste from something virtual
That washes away some of the daily grime.
But what about a fish cooked in a church
Instead of pilgrims kneeling in a pew,
What could be better than a holy perch
And cooked for Port Pirie's chosen few.
So hope that this has given food for thought,
So we can eat, the holy fish they caught.

Day 10 – Dutchman’s Stern – Quorn

There’s been a lot of rain about in the last week, mostly at night time, which for us has been a stroke of luck. But here in Quorn it is not when it rains that matters so much, but whether or not they get decent drinking water...and for some reason, that is not happening. We use tap water for drinking, but it is nearly undrinkable. It is my only complaint but obviously I have strong support.

So, it is off to the “Dutchman’s Stern”, a name that baffled me, so I checked it out. It was simple – there is a vessel in Holland that has a similar shape to this mountain, thus the name. So I’m guessing there is no other Dutch connection in this, but, the shape similarity. I’m sure at least one of our good Dutch friends will further inform us of this when they read our blog.

No matter the answer, this walk was great. And it started with the signs. It is the first time that we have had no confusion with what the signs are saying (sorry, another complaint). When I think of the Dutch, I think of good and efficient organisers, and wondering if there is a connection there?

Lining the open spaces at the base of the mountain, were families of kangaroos who looked up tiredly as we walked past. Many would simply continue eating or sleeping while the other more anxious ones hopped, what they thought, was a safe distance away. There were scores of them and it caused me to wonder whether they would be on the present culling program. This week we couldn’t do a certain walk that we wanted because shooters will be killing goats and foxes in the park.

Some days earlier I talked of that magnificent ‘Australian Grass Tree’ and how we saw so many of them on one of our walks last week. But today they were in even greater proliferation in all shapes and sizes, some burnt, others were new growth. They lined the pathways, congregated on the cliff edges, and spread throughout the whole mountain.

A young Queensland couple passed us on the lower slopes where the Blue Gums dominated. We saw the older Victorian couple on the upper slopes amongst the beautiful Sheoaks and Sugar Gums. Then after, when the six of us gathered on the summit, we chatted as we gazed out on the Northern Cypress Pines nestling on the cliff faces. We soon left on our separate ways in a saudade (Portuguese) sort of way – (ie while it was sad to say goodbye we were happy to have met them in the first place).

The Incomparable Australian Grass Tree



The Ferals

The Hills of Adelaide are under threat
Some folks out here are absolutely flummoxed,
That feral creatures are still roaming yet
And native species die cause they're outfoxed.
Biodiversity destroyed by rabbits
Crops and native plants go with the deer,
The danger lies in their persistent habits
And there are plenty more that we should fear.
Environmental pain caused by the goat
And native birds get eaten by the cat,
Most damage done by those that come by boat
Destroying native creature habitat.
Now's the time to stop this messy dance,
To give our own, a much more greater chance?

Day 11 – Warren Gorge – Devil’s Peak

An Aboriginal man spilt his beer as he tripped on the curb, and I thought I was the one supposed to do that. “Owyagoin?” he said. “Terrific”, I said. And why is you triffic?” “Cause I’ve just walked around your town tonight, and I like to walk and see new things. “That’s great old fella”, he said, looking straight at me. It was sunset, and I had been discovering a bit about a modest country town. Earlier we had bought things for dinner at IGA where the staff were mostly Aboriginal, and I noticed how efficient and helpful they were. And that made both of us feel terrific.

“And ow was yer day old fella?” he easily asked. I thought this was a queue to call him “black fella” (in my book, a friendly term), but I thought that was ‘a name too far’ as google often told me, so I settled on the ‘A’ word. I said I had a great day. “And why was that old fella?” he said, clearly interested, or without his drink, would he have even talked to me, so I was glad of the alcohol in this case.

“I walked the Warren Gorge”. “Ah did you” - maybe now questioning the “old fella’ tag. “Yeah”, I said. We walked on undulating paths, surrounded by Australian Native Pine. For the first time I saw wild goats who, seeing us, headed for the hills. This took me back to the Information officer who said one park was closed, because ‘the shooters are there to kill them, ohh. We were surrounded by tiny white flower bushes, with grass trees scattered like sentinels protecting all that was native. As we skirted the mountain, we were overwhelmed with those very old rocks and then ended our walk where we began, in a dry stony creek.

Yes, it was a terrific day. “And then I walked up to Devil’s Peak,” I said, (or rather walked and ran because I was on my own, and Corrie balked because she had already climbed her summit earlier today). “Whooohh”, he said, “you’re good’. “And you”, I said, ‘have you done these walks”? He looked sad – “when I was a little fella”. “And why didn’t you continue”? I said. “This” (he pointed in resignation to his beer).

I’m lucky to be doing this as an ‘old fella’. I wondered if this ‘young fella’ had enjoyed climbing over boulders, around huge colourful rocks, admiring the grass trees that decorated the surrounds. I wonder if he crawled through that small opening to finally poke his head out to see the summit – ‘The Devil’s Peak’. Then did he dance down jumping from rock to rock while running the stretches at the base of this extraordinary piece of nature’s carvings? “Good talking with you”, I said to the ‘young fella’. “And to you too old fella”, as he stumbled towards the door that keeps him away from mountains he might have otherwise climbed.

Lack of identity can ruin lives



Indigenous

How far away are we from that connection
At 75, I do not know their name,
It started with our cultural rejection
Today, it's at our feet, that lies the blame.
Aboriginal excludes the Torres Strait
Indigenous is also too exclusive,
While 'blacks' is bad, and nor are we their mate
And 'aborigines' just as divisive,
So try 'first nations people' for a start
And look for what their 'country' is down under,
And try and put the horse before the cart
In Adelaide their name is Kurna Nunga,
Ideally, try to not name them at all
Remember, it's their country - it's their call.

Day 12 – Mount Brown

At 964 metres, Mt Brown is one of the highest peaks in the South Flinders Ranges. The lookout here commemorates Robert Brown, who was the naturalist aboard Matthew Flinders' Investigator, the first ship to circumnavigate Australia. Along the 15km walking trail there is evidence of a 1km deep canyon formed 600 million years ago.

It seemed the longest mountain we had climbed to date. Lots of mostly older couples with a few young ones. Adelaideans have been very friendly along the walk, so we have had to show some urgency because our time is often short. We took that time to experience another totally different environment. With wildlife we only saw two kangaroos but with trees and plants, they were many.

Large River Red Gums as usual dominate the creek beds in a perfect environment that suits their largesse, while Cypress Pine, Grey Box, Sheoaks and Christmas Bush dominate the lower slopes. Small thin (about 100mms in diameter) gloriously white gums were scattered in small groups, and how they got there had me thinking deeply.

Higher up and just when I thought it was our first 'grass tree free' mountain, there they were in greater abundance than I had ever seen before. And rocks and stones, their ubiquitousness in South Australia or at least in the Adelaide Hills and Flinders Mountains never ceased to amaze me. The great age of these areas seem to be an important reason for their presence.

I'm not one who looks forward to looking out at views but the presence of extensive rolling hills mesmerised me as I glimpsed them through the gaps that appeared on the way down. I believe these gaps were the result of woodcutters searching for reliable timber prior to this becoming a 'Conservation Park'. It was also on the way up that we chatted to a pilot, who was trying to convince us to take a ride in the scariest 4 wheel drive he had ever experienced. He was also the pick up person for his wife and friend who were walking the Heysen Trail. If you're not a camper this is your only option for completing this 1200km journey. I guess they chose to walk so as to avoid the 4 wheel drive.

We thought how much happier we were with our feet on the ground with a chance to look around at all the joys of nature, as we bid farewell to this daring dude. We passed many others, a mixture of retirees and younger folk as we enjoyed a relaxed walk down Mt Brown. Today's was a long walk that did not include my usual early morning and early evening walks because it took us well over our 20kms target.

One Step at a Time



Walking

Not everyone enjoys the art of exercise
Can be boring, difficult and time consuming,
At times you'll hear the victim's painful cries
And often it's a chance they're not resuming.
So what's another way to old age health
I'm talking 'bout the brain as well as body,
And everyone can do it with no wealth
So all can spend their life not looking shoddy.
It's simple and its called the art of walking
Go slow and just relax out in the air,
Go fast and change your brain while simply talking
Go brisk, get fit, with others you can share.
With exercise, you have an inventory,
But after walking you will have a story.

Day 13 – Waukarie Creek

I finished my early walk and arrived at the coffee shop at five to eight first in line, or so I thought. There were two doors, damn it!. The door opened, but it wasn't my door. So sadly I shuffled away. Then this older man at the 'open' door said to me "you were first", I wanted to hug him. Corrie was there by now at the open 'ordering only door'.

After taking Corrie's order, the food person asked me what I wanted to drink, and I said "water". She looked at me strangely then said, "no, what do you want to drink with your meal"? Thinking what else you might do with water, I hesitated for a moment then said again: "water please", maybe a little too loudly. She then opened the other door for me to enter. I sat by the fire (in heaven). She came with our order and as far away from me as she could, she passed the water with a straight arm and a crooked look. I took the water, drank it in one gulp, wanting to hug her too. So what's the connection here with water?

I have been drinking bore water for the last four days and I hate it. Years in central western Queensland turned me off it for life. So I knew the only coffee shop in town would have some other type, and they did, it was called tank water. It's not much of a segue, but this experience brought out some other ideas about Quorn's water problems. Firstly why are they not permitted to join up with a major water pipe; secondly why haven't they built a huge tank; and thirdly why don't they use water sources like rivers. Well you've heard about being up Ship Creek without a paddle, well we went down Waukarie Creek without siting any water. Maybe creeks don't supply enough water, not sure. So not having a lot on my mind, as you can see, I was deep in thought about this as we walked along Waukerie Creek.

As usual we saw the large white and grey dappled Red Gums, Sheoaks and Cypress Pine, along with all kinds of thriving shrubs and grasses. But many of those huge gums are dying. I don't know whether the fact that this stony river was water-free has anything to do with it. I was however amazed that the trail we were on often criss crosses the creek. This would mean to me that the creek is always dry.

Along the walk we spotted some life however, in the form of a huge kangaroo. I think he was red but if not, certainly not your every day grey. Then we met three lost young people who had just found their way again. We continued on past some amazing rock formations that chose our late lunch spot for us, where we had lots to digest, as a few sprinkles of rain helped to whet our appetite.

A girl and a tree



Worth a Hug

“The first was you”, I nearly hugged this man
Uncertain looks appeared to doubt this fact,
Unusual, I thought, to take this stand,
But paved the way for him, the second act.
'Twas cold - one table only, fronted fire
By being first I only had to walk,
But others had already skipped the mire
And found our table where they sat to talk.
I wonder if they heard that we were first
And desperate to get the premier place,
They took our spot, had we in fact been cursed?
Or was this just another bloody race?
We told the owners - make it really hot!
And soon enough, the table, we forgot.

Day 14 – Mount Ohlssen-Bagge and Wangara Lookout

We're in Wilpena Pound, the heart of the Flinders Ranges, and once again my booking.com genius has done it again – last minute vacancies. A cosy quiet little collection of huts – similar to motel rooms with a fancy part and a more basic part. The fancy part is resort-like with all the trimmings, while we go to the IGA. Sadly there is no wifi in the room so it's not as relaxing writing posts. But there is wifi close by in the lounge area as long as I finish by 9.00pm.

We are then set for our walks. We just leave our room, walk to a space 100 metres away and choose from roughly three trails. The next day the hiker walks along one of those trails and after a few kilometres can branch off onto trails where once again there are more choices. Aside from the above, a short drive of 15-30 minutes would take you to other sites that also branch out into more trails. After that you would need to get accommodation in other towns.

Today we completed two of those walks. Mt Bagge was the first. The area is dominated by high tussocky hills surrounded by mountains that are of a burnt orange colour, with these mountain boulders large and small scattered all around. Jumping rocks and dodging spiky bushes led us to the mountain's base where we started climbing a quite difficult path which wound its way up an ever more steeper pathway which you could sometimes only identify by the yellow markers.

We were crawling, looking for different routes, and looking ever upwards to see what the track was doing. The vegetation hadn't changed, just the slope. We nearly reached the top but at one stage I felt a familiar dizziness and a little shaky. I reached out to hold myself steady, but was okay. After resting I came to a section that was almost vertical, that I normally would have climbed although with some difficulty. But we were so close to the top that we didn't need to go on.

I didn't get dizzy on the way down so I could be quite relaxed with my rock jumping. A quick lunch on a rock and a walk home to make more accommodation bookings, and an afternoon stroll along the magnificent Red River Gum Creek. This was a little more relaxing than our morning climb, ending with a walk to an ancient homestead past a family of wild goats and an echidna. However there was an outlook about 2kms up, and even though it was steep it was fairly easy because it had stairs. We left the Wangara Hill on a quick walk home, where Corrie soon had us a guaranteed bed for two more nights. I've noted that we have many more mountains to climb.

Sorry, no Snow



A Mountain of Rocks

These rocks and stones do put it all in context
It is not just another mountain climb,
The distance travelled from one to the next
Includes how far this hill goes back in time.
The track identified by fallen rocks
Fallen twice as hikers mark their track,
Pathways that will simply rock your socks
On Ohlssen-Bagge there's yet another crack.
Then boulders soon appear as if a fort
And camouflaged by trees to slow us down,
Eventually the journey came to nought
'Twas dizziness that soon caused me to frown.
So close I was in touch of mountain summit,
And close enough, to cross it off the bucket.

Day 15 – Wilpena Pound

We were supposed to go on a walk that meant driving to the start. It had rained all night so we had already put off a major walk to St Mary Saddle because we were advised of 'wet' danger. But when I mentioned our alternative arrangements to the ranger, he said that if I messed up his road he would have to fine me. He was right, I had already seen one of those messed up roads and it ain't pretty. So I agreed with him and went back to tell Corrie the bad news.

She was happy with a small break but it would still be 20kms. So I spent the morning discovering the compound where the array of huts were looking a little like a construction site minus the noise. Part of this was due to the mass evacuation of guests but not so readily replaced. So many huts but so few people. One moment you can't get a booking, the next they are giving out big discounts, so Corrie would find two days here and two days there, allowing us to finish our climbs.

Wilpena Pound or Ikara - aboriginal for 'meeting place', is a natural amphitheatre of mountains. Surrounded by these mountains gives it the look of a 'cupped hand', with Wilpena being a small part of the 'palm'. Thus, Wilpena is aboriginal for "place of bent fingers" which could relate to the hand or the cold or both. Fortunately attempts at farming failed in earlier times for whatever reason, thus allowing it to belong to everyone to travel to and marvel at.

We took another long walk along a trail we have been on three times, but this time we went further because we have two major climbs coming up and they are both on this path. We were hoping to meet up with a group whom we found had hiked to St Mary this morning. This was to find out if there were any issues from the rain, and then choose one of the two routes. On my way to the information office there was an excited group celebrating their walk. Fortunately I got to talk to the group leader so I was able to get the low down on going high up.

Returning from this miniature village, I noticed how dark it was, when I could not see any of the dozens of people walking along the roadway. Fortunately the vehicles were travelling very slowly. Then I noticed there were no footpaths and not one streetlight, the tiny bits of light coming from small lights on our doorways. Obviously the authors of the creation of this village were thinking climate. So instead of using solar to power their facilities, the emphasis was predominantly on not having the need to use any type of generation. And this was dependant on having limited need, while also ensuring people don't get run over.

There's Light behind the Shadow



Wilpena Pound

An uninviting name - Wilpena Pound
Invites you in to stay a little while,
Do not be swayed by how the name does sound
It's sure to lift your spirits and make you smile.
A cupped hand describes this awesome place
The palm - the basin, mountains are the fingers,
No lights at night - so fuels not in your face
While nature's scent is sweet and often lingers.
We walk beside the dry and stony creek
Then past the Heysen River Red Gum Trees,
In the shadow of the great St Mary peak
It's times like these that we were sent to seize.
A sky that changes when you look away
The mountain colours change, what a display.

Day 16 – St Mary Peak – Malloga Falls

It's the highest Mountain in the Flinders Ranges but walkers can only walk to the Tanderra Saddle just below the summit. We acknowledge that the peak of this mountain is sacred and local elders would be pleased if we respected that request. So it was with a little relief that we couldn't travel to the top – relief from the rain, the slippery rocks and the howling wind, all were making the climb very dangerous.

We were first on the mountain today, leaving 'the pound' at 0715 after Corrie had filled an obligatory rule of advising when we were leaving for this difficult climb. On our way down we met two other pairs of walkers, a mother and daughter and an older couple, all very keen to take this 25km walk. We said our hellos and goodbyes in the same breath and left them to meet this challenging day. This was a boulder mountain, with these huge rocks being the largest predicament in getting to the non-sacred saddle.

The walk was a mixture of track scapes. We would be walking quite fast along clear and narrow paths for a time and then around a corner were 'very hard to walk on' boulders ranging from 'foot-size to 'wombat size'. But then we had to work out which were stable and which were not, sometimes we got it right, at others it was a near fall or a sprained ankle. Then there was the rain which made them all slippery making it very risky which we counteracted by moving proportionately slowly. We could have reached the saddle but now the distance home becomes too great because of the difficult terrain and rain.

Our second predicament was whether to take a side track and walk to a 'falls'. The only reason we contemplated this was that it was on the way home, but it was a turn too far and we are now paying the price recovering from bad backs. This walk was covered by trees similar to our tee tree with the walking surface similar to our mountain climb – rocks and boulders. Eventually we got to the falls but no water. It needed more than a night of drenching rain to make a 'falls'. However we saw the gorge that houses the falls (Endowie) and it was a special site in itself, with its superb rock architecture.

When we arrived home we had to present ourselves to prove we made it otherwise a search party would have begun. Fortunately we arrived just on dark and I was barely able to make it, so the decision not to go further earlier was a sound one. Back home late to write this hurriedly because I have to find wifi. A very long days walk so a little more conservative tomorrow.

Know your Limit



Never Conquered

Unenviable it is to be the tallest
There's always someone else that wants to grow,
Success is at the top that's what they tell us
And failure lies in hollows far below.
So when one says they've conquered something high
They overestimate their newborn status,
There's much more to that mountain than the sky
Plaudits received can often seem quite callus,
It's healthier I think to do your best
And if you do eventually reach the peak,
Say thank you, and ask if you may rest
And ponder not your conquest, but your feat.
The mountain's not just there for us to climb,
Instead, we contemplate, that it's sublime.

Day 17 – St Mary alternate – Heysen Trail

The outside route to St Mary looked interesting and should take our focus off our backaches. On the way we met a young couple who had just completed their walk, so we swapped notes about our climbs. Here for a day they wanted to get as much out of it as possible. He mentioned his dad who is an iron sculptor, which was noisy, and in days past in Balmain where he lived, this was acceptable but not today so he had to cease work.

We had just reached other sculptures, like an exotic garden amongst the colourful rocks. There were large grey sculpted rocks, pretty shaped grass trees with rain drops dangling from their reedy fronds, standing amongst scattered colourful stones, amid a mixture of varied green shrubs on red soil. And there were many of these, all with the glow that only rain can bring.

Then there were these rolling, twisting hills and valleys that formed our crooked path, sculptures in themselves, leading us on to further beauties. On our right was a native pine forest intimidating with its burnt trunks, but cosy when it rained, and it did. On our left were the orange mountains of the Flinders, imposing, beautiful.

It took me back to our previous walks which of course are all great works of art. The hidden gorges, ensuring that you worked hard to find them; mountain paths, some which seemed to be deterring our advance; then the gums and the grass trees that delight us every day; all of which excite us with their presence.

After yesterday we needed longer breaks, so after lunch we went for a drive to plan our departure. We saw the walks I had researched as we passed their signs on the roadside and new trails that had escaped me, especially a mountain climb with the word spectacular in it. Sounds like a sculpture we would love to see.

Back home, still with light left in the day, I ventured out on to the Heysen Trail, which we had crossed and walked on multiple times before. The sign said that this was for experienced walkers only and “advised” against taking it. So, confident but wary, I was comforted by the mountain’s snugness to me, I knew the trail symbols, and I wasn’t going far. There was an eerie stillness as I walked. And then it happened. Those very dark clouds opened up with blueberry-size hailstones, that stung my arms. It seemed forever before it stopped but it wasn’t, and it didn’t. Quiet again, then another hail storm. Very quiet once more and then a third burst. I reflected on that earlier sign – I was advised.

You need to walk in your hail once in your life



Don't Go

It said "don't go", 'less you're a long time walker
I knew the signs, the track was clear as mud,
Now on my own, not happy - "I'm a talker"
Another kangaroo hits with a thud.
And then it came, a shock only to me
Just when we went to cross the Heysen Trail,
The day turned night, it's when the devils see
It's such a sight this solid bank of hail.
The first time, I just didn't see it coming
The second time, my poncho stared it down,
The third time, this time now I heard it humming
The last, relief, as I walk back to town.
It feels so special, a rare experience,
I treat it now with some significance.

Day 18 – The Bridle Gap

We met them by the pond while she was talking to a tree. We looked up at the tree and saw a tiny bird that she was conversing with. We chatted a little, with the 'she' that is, who being distracted by our presence forgot where she was with the bird. Now finished with bird conversation, we all decided to move on, with the walk, that is. A typical day for us seeing very few people, a surprise to me because Wilpena Pound is a well known popular resort.

They were walkers, he a cyclist as well, and they live in Rozelle, not far from us in Balmain. Remember that only recently we had our meeting with someone else from Balmain. So we chatted about these and other things, and wondered if there was a 'Covid creep' happening around the inner west. We talked of getting together to talk of more stories and suggested a meet up after our walks somewhere, sometime. On our past walks we have made close friends and talk regularly to them swapping stories and even attending an online wedding.

We left them at an old building called 'the farmhouse', a beautifully restored building 2kms from Wilpena and took the next turn to Bridle Gap. It was a flat surface up until the surrounding hills, with blackened tea trees dotting the landscape. This then melded in with a dotted landscape of blackened native pines where families of kangaroos grazed peacefully tens of metres away; a black nanny and her baby chewed what was left of the grass; while multi coloured green parrots jumped about eating what they eat.

The mist was closing in on the mountain saddle we were heading for, as yet another very rocky path challenged us on our last few kilometres. Up into the foothills slowly we hiked as the rain became heavier and we had to be more careful where we placed our poles and peds. On arrival at our high viewing point it was mostly mist but if I waited a little it would momentarily lift. On our way back down we re-met our friends, and then two huge packs arrived with a man in front of each one.

This was nearly as exciting as seeing my first koala in the wild. They were the first hikers we had seen on the Heysen Trail and as the packs suggest, they carry everything with them. One was an engineer who will spend three months walking the 1200kms trail, while his companion was a geologist, so unlike us, he liked stones especially those very old ones. Soon, it was back home for us, our backs still aching but much improved from two days prior. It really is starting to feel like home after nearly a week in the one place.

Bridle Gap is the one place where a horseman can enter Wilpena Pound



Surprise Meeting

We met them at a waterhole so rare
The girl was happily chatting to a bird,
He was seated though he wished he had a chair
Relaxed, our footsteps were not even heard.
A lawyer she was teaching others straight talk
The bird's an audience for one dry run,
And he a writer going for a walk
They're on a mission 'til the day is done.
I told her of my poem, 'the law's an ass'
The main reason why talking was her subject,
I also mentioned 'lawyers blowing gas'
Most in her class had often been a suspect.
Excited that we'll see them back in town,
It's great to know, that two friends we have found.

Day 19 – Rawnsley Bluff

One article said this was a very difficult climb; another said it was rocky but only difficult for a short way and then flattened out; another said it was straight forward for most hikers. We decided to call it bluff even though it was one for and two against, and go for the straight forward one. Maybe the authors of these comments could state their own background, so we would have a much clearer picture of the challenge or not, eg they might say: “we are old and carrying old injuries and we find climbing the mountain ‘a walk in the park’.

Just in case there was an issue, I covered myself and my ‘walking reputation’ by adding a couple of kilometres to my pre dawn walk. The danger however is that the walk turns out to be a marathon. It was a twenty kilometre drive to the start of our day’s journey on a now dried out dusty road. After so much rain I thought it would be badly torn up, but then again, being mostly rocks, they probably prevented this from happening, especially when they have been there for nearly eight hundred million years.

Initially it was a creek bed that led us to the foothills of the main range where it became gradually steeper culminating in beautiful views across the escarpment. The tea trees (I think) showed the way. I have tea trees in my backyard and these have a brighter green leaf and are more bushy. They, along with the multitude of ‘small native pines’, joined us on the couple of kilometres to yet another “orange” mountain. Then gradually the path got steeper. It was a fairly good path initially but at times it took a bit of thought to navigate.

We came to a section not far from the top, similar to when I had my dizzy spell and I held back because the steepness would not have allowed me to sit, and that is what I would have needed to do. This time I felt great, and scrambled up in a safe way and got to a section that was flat and the path became much more doable. It was a victory of sorts as I quietly mocked my interfering fibrillation.

Going down was easier but required us to be a lot more careful. Back home and a walk to see the sunset from the top of the hill was a lovely end to an adventurous day. On our last night here it also gave me the chance to see that the pound we were in was completely ringed by mountains – superb. I finally saw in real life, the ‘palm of the hand’ that was our home, and bathed in the beauty of the surrounding fingers - the mountains. Now it’s out to dinner with our neighbours to swap stories on our adventures on the Flinders tallest mountain – St Mary.

800 million years...that's old



It's a Bluff

There is a saying which says: "I'll call your bluff"
It often means that you think they are faking,
In cards, in fun, in life and other stuff
You call it, if you think it's a risk worth taking.
But there's another bluff, it's nature's own
It's a cliff that's high and usually rather steep,
Unless you fly or climbing you've been shown
It's best, that to the gentler slopes, you keep.
Remember too it's not just any old rock
It was born - 800 million years B.C.,
Obviously made of old and sterner stock
Its birth, it came from God's own special decree.
But is it God's, or a bluff that can't be seen,
Let's call it out, and find out where its been.

Day 20 – Bunyeroo Gorge and Trig Hill

Last dinner was with our new friends from Rozelle. They followed us on the Bridle Path yesterday because they thought their initial lookout hike was not enough and if us two oldies could mess with the rocks and the rain, then they could. Sadly she hurt her knees with the rock jumping (I tell you it is a highly specialised art), but gladly they were able to walk the big mountain today. So it was story time over dinner about our passions in life, and about life in general. It was a special evening and we parted company with a promise to catch up just a little west of the Anzac Bridge.

Today we walked a long way down a creek where the slope is hard to ascertain when there is no water, but the sand did appear to be swept one way. While Malloga Falls was a gorge, it was a 'destination', ie. the walk went for a long way until the gorge was reached. On the other hand Bunyeroo Gorge was a journey (the 4km walk itself), imposing 600 million year old high rock formations guiding us to a wide open creek. As we walked along it was interesting to see hundreds of young gums thriving on higher sandy ground in the creek's centre.

It was a geological walk and even though this topic isn't of particular interest to us, it became an interest because the gorge itself inspired us. So we took photographs of the poles with the name of rocks on them, and will use them to decipher other rocks. We will also be meeting up with an old uni Geologist friend straight after the walk so we hope that we can learn more from his extensive knowledge in the field.

On our way north to our new home in Leigh Creek, and after our adventures above, we stopped for awhile in the highest town in SA – Blinman. There was little to see but a huge hill overlooking the town. I hadn't any climbing behind me today (we had run out of mountains) so I climbed to the top where the local kids had built a memorial (stone) to world war veterans.

The rest of the road trip was stunning but a little scary as the dirt roads were so steep with no barriers so at times it was very slow but magnificent views were the undoubted reward. We also saw what they called the Great Wall of China – bare hillsides topped by rocks similar to formations we had seen everywhere.

Leaving the Flinders for the first time in a while, it became as flat as Lake Eyre as far as we could see, until we arrived at our new digs in Vulkathunha Gammon Ranges National Park – our mission: to find more mountains.

The local kids leave their hand print



What's the Rush

So many people want to get some where
There's urgency, it's written on their face,
Loud voices, curses as they rip and tear
If gentleness before, now, there's no trace.
The destination can be so inviting
So many friends you haven't seen for years,
A trip to somewhere new it's so exciting
It's all too much, it's bringing me to tears.
But what about the journey, what a waste
Just racing past, a wasted rate of knots
Is there not a lot out there to taste?
No ifs or buts, just loads of why's and whats.
A destination's richer for the journey,
Taking time no longer does concern me.

Day 21 – Leigh Creek

We've come back down to earth after leaving the relatively pristine environs of Wilpena Pound. As soon as we hit the long, dry, flat plains of what I hear some people call, the real Australia, it seems like another country. As you go further north it becomes dryer, the towns become smaller and the deserts loom large. There are mountains but there is little or no accommodation, so we would have to travel too far by car to start our hike.

And they have a new hike here that opens tomorrow. It starts in Leigh Creek and ends at Aroona Dam. We had permission to start out on it today and it took us a while to get used to the parched stony ground, the small eucalypts, the salt type bushes, the flies and the heat (would you believe)? And we got lost.

Not that we got lost, lost, but had missed the sign. Normally we would have gone back to find the sign but Corrie was thinking otherwise, so we walked on until a fence appeared. There was a hill to our right, in fact a line of them which were with us on our 'wrong hike'. So we climbed the hill and I walked the hill line home, up and down for five hills. One had no trees. Another one had a few, with fifty wild goats sitting under the few. The next had two kangaroos and still a few trees, while the rest were bare, but what they all had, were small, sharp red rocks.

I came off the last hill to meet Corrie on the wrong road, drank water and then shamefully found the guide pole a little obscured by a fence post, so followed it but could not find the next one. I sincerely wish them well on their opening tomorrow and will be there if they start before 7.00am.

We are still uncertain where we will be tomorrow as we try to sort out options with our intermittent wifi and no phone connection. So we call in to the pub whenever we get a chance, not for a drink, but to see if they are connected, and, we will call in to the service station, not to give the car a drink, but to get a sim card.

Leigh Creek is an unusual town. At times, it seems, it's mostly tourists who bring life to what the publican calls: a forgotten town, thus troubles with nbn for example. Trees are dying along the street because they used to be watered by those who have long gone, according to the guy who was cutting them down. Shops, and residences behind tall sheets of asbestos are closing down rapidly, and at the same time they are opening their first ever hiking trail tomorrow. There must be someone who believes in Leigh Creek, we just hope it's not too late. This sign: Innamincka - next service - 452 kms - stopped us in our tracks.

A meditative drive



Walking Delivers

There's no such thing as a wasted walk, trust me
There are things that can be wasted but never a walk,
There's always something alive, a plant or a tree
You can ponder alone or with another, talk.
A desert may seem dead - I feel alive
The mountains they excite with a sense of awe,
Discomfort comes with the rain but gives me drive
The heat is hell but shade then means much more.
When I get lost I have a story to tell
A blister happens but I can always cope,
My heart goes funny but for that I have a pill
The walk's too much but I always find some hope.
Then there's your health, walk is best for me
Most people can walk, give it a go, you'll see.

Day 22 -Parachilna

As I explained earlier, my experience here in SA has shown me that there have been two types of gorges – a long gorge that you admire on a ‘journey’ through it; and a gorge that you arrive at and then admire, that, I call, a ‘destination’ gorge. This was a ‘journey’ gorge that we travelled along for over six kilometres. A dry, ‘two semi trailer wide’ ,and at times rocky creek bed, narrowing to a car width creek at others, huddled under the great red gums as imposing as the challenging rocky mountains.

At times we walked along mainly gravel size stones with larger scattered rocks and slate that had shattered on their fall down from the mountain sides above. Native pines monopolised the walk both on the ground and on the mountains above. On the creek banks the ground varied from red gravel to a sandy coloured soil topped by thousands of spinnifex type bushes, and divided by eroded ground that during rain storms become deeper and wider.

Like the goats watching us from high on the gorge walls, we often made our own tracks away from the tough going sandy creek bottom. It was a return journey rather than a circuit but it did not matter because the gorge was quite different on the way back. Even the beautifully coloured stones on the creek bed looked different with the sun then poking through the clouds seemingly eager to see what we were seeing. There were still small rises and falls as we traversed the quite deep eroded river-like crevices along the way.

We returned via the gorge’s namesake, the closed town of Parachilna. There are many stories about the town’s pub – the Prairie Hotel. It is alone (a few homes but no shops) and looking out on a near desert as far as the eye could see except for the distant gorge that we had just visited. But alas it is closed for renovations so there is really not much to do in this unusual town. Other towns nearby are also closed, but more permanently, whilst others are close to quitting their social life, owing to the closure of once busy productive mines.

We finished the day by looking for a sign that will allow us to complete the newly designed trail from Leigh Creek to the local dam, and there are hills! We head back to the familiar Flinders tomorrow. So it’s off to the ‘on and off’ wifi hotel to find accommodation. Our room here was one of many used primarily by construction workers, road work employees and council workers - late to bed after lots of drinking, up before dawn for work and generally minding their own business.

A Destination or a Journey



Hotel Prairie

It's unique, it's a pub and it's in the middle of nowhere
It's expensive, it's smart, it's called the Hotel Prairie,
But it's closed right now and not a soul can go there
Just there, a tantalising mystery.
The reason it is closed is 'cause it's gold
They're renovating, there's more gold to make,
So mining gold because the coal will fold
The Prairie is the mine, make no mistake.
The owners made their money growing beef
While at their cafe other meat they ate,
With camel, goat and 'roo' they've turned a leaf
Emu et al outside the farmer's gate.
Then special art, your visu-al entree,
The main is then the gorge on full display.

Day 23 – Aroona Dam

Some days ago I got lost because I missed a sign. Below is my third attempt to get it right. I tried the newly opened walk at Leigh Creek this morning because I think I now have an idea of where the path goes. The sun was beginning to shed light at the far end of the earth struggling to be seen behind the white grey clouds. It seemed that yesterday was a rare occurrence and there was no sign of any red glow.

I could see the signs now and was moving swiftly as I was imagining and comprehending the surveyors' mind. When there wasn't a steel post I could see small yellow wooden posts that I had to line up with my eye and there would be another sign all pointing to Aroona Dam, my destination. My other eye was busy looking at two birds that were busily chirping, one a beautiful olive green parrot with a range of colours on its bright breast.

Up the short steep side of this challenging hill, along its rocky ridge making my own track but always going back if I couldn't find a new one, and then lining up sticks again. The fences here are to stop wild dogs so they are very high, and they have a specially steep set of stairs to straddle this imposing fence. What looked like newly polished stones of all colours brought my eyes to the ground. Mounds seem to have been human made and rocks surrounded special trees. On my way up another hill I noticed leaves of shale poking out from the ground and continuing up the ridge. I was later to realise that all this beautiful country was the result of all the hard work the people had done in order to restore this land to its previous state and more.

When I returned to our room I noticed these same stones in nearly every garden, only one of hundreds had a lawn. The only plants were native, which is a good thing, a mirror image of the outer hills. I had been following Aroona Dam signs for a while now, but now they were saying my home name – Leigh Creek. I started back to see where I had gone wrong but I could not find it. So I thought I was never meant to see this dam and left a little sad that it wasn't to be.

At home we had our last struggle with our technical stuff and wifi, hoping for better luck at the southern end of the Flinders Ranges. Before we left we were encouraged by seeing some life in the town. Kids were being dropped off at school, two of them raising the Australian Flag and the Torres Straight Islanders Flag. A teacher came out with another flag which advertised wifi in the community library so we may become part of this unusual community before we go.

Great Journeys without a Destination



People Erosion is Nature's Erosion

This town had lost its people, and its land
Their goats and rabbits took the 'kangas' food',
They ate away the grass, near every strand
Eroded soil now meant the land was screwed.
The foxes and the feral cats were plenty
Killing horse and native wallabies,
Without which, this pretty land was empty
And populated with the wannabes.
But there was help, these animals will die
The food and trees will grow and come back strong,
The silting of the rivers made them cry
This degradation's gone on for too long.
And now there is a sanctuary so vast,
That's back to life, as though a spell was cast.

Day 24 – Mount Jarvis

I found a mountain!!! And it's a beauty. Eight kilometres away across a flat expanse of red earth lies Mount Jarvis. As I walked towards it (I saw no-one, except Corrie all day) I could see the rocks on the side and near the top, glisten. There had been some rain and I was putting my poncho on as I noticed it. There was a saddle and the mountain on the other side of it also glistened.

Corrie had other things to do so I was on my own. I talked about the thrill of going round corners. Well this was similar. The glisten then led to not just a cliff face, but instead, a hotchpotch of huge moss - covered coloured rocks balancing on each other, at times with what seemed, an impossibility. I thought about my own balance and wondered how long I would last there.

Closer still and off with my no longer needed wet gear, as I neared the mountain's base, I could see a very steep road winding its way up the mountainside. As I was wishing Corrie was there with me, she suddenly appeared as I was now nearing the top of the saddle. I came down like I would in a car - very slowly, and we headed back up our Swiss mountain once more. With no designated parking, we drove over a dirt drain and squeezed in between a group of trees.

Along the ridge was a stunning array of coloured mossy rocks in beautiful designs as though an expert landscaper had created the perfect design. We went methodically slowly, because the 'some sort of trail' had been drenched overnight and the rocks were dangerously slippery anyway. I don't usually stop long to look at rocks, but these had my complete attention.

We were once again on the Heysen Trail which continued after our walk had come to an end on top of Mt Jarvis. My curiosity took me round another rock where there was a sign which said that we were now entering the land of the rare 'yellow footed wallaby', becoming extinct, as rabbits eat away their food and foxes bare their teeth. I went only a little further for I now saw I was on sacred wallaby land.

My early morning walk on non sacred land is made possible by street lights, while my evening walks (if my kilometres are low) can expand a little with this now fullish moon. Like Leigh Creek, it is a neat town in the middle of nowhere but with no deserted houses. Gardens are very similar with all sizes of rocks arranged in unattractive unusual ways, they were trying though. I wondered at the contrasting and stunning rock arrangements on Mount Jarvis.

If you don't get your balance right, you will fall



A Mountain to Ourselves

I saw a mountain on the far horizon
Or so it seemed, as I took a hasty pace,
No moment was there any compromis'n
As I stepped it out towards its watery face.
My wife arrived as though it was a relay
We left the car excitably we climbed,
The weather threatened, there was no delay
These rocks of beauty, nothing else to find.
'Go no further less you're on the Heysen'
'The laws an ass' I'm often heard to say,
I broke the law but no shoulder to cry on
It's such a treat, and only a short way.
This mountain ridge just off the Flinders Ranges,
So quietly modest with beauty that's outrageous.

Day 25 – Hidden Gorge Mountain

We're back down in the Southern Flinders Ranges (parked at Port Augusta because it is the closest town to these mountains) where we planned to be because we're on our way home, slowly, so this will also be our accommodation for the night. There are mountains here we were keeping up our sleeve in case we ran out, and we have, so we are calling on them to complete our thirty. Like walking, the experience in a car is different when driving the other way even on the same track. We would however prefer to drive as little as possible.

Today it was the Hidden Gorge Mountain. Not really, it's my name for it because I couldn't find its real name and it is very close to the Hidden Gorge. There are different starting points for many walks, especially when they're on a circuit that doesn't come back to the initial starting point, which often means a long way back to your car. This was one of those, but doesn't work for us because we would have to walk back to our car which could be tens of kilometres away.

So we began at Mambray Creek, the starting point for a range of hikes. This was our travel day today so we were limited in the time we had to beat the dark. So we wandered through this 'dense tree dry creek', the trees now being probably my favourite – the Red River Gums. I've shared my fascination with them before but there is one characteristic, among their many, that really fascinates me.

It is their branches. The way they twist and bend their shiny limbs mesmerises me. They seem to be acrobatically trying to outdo each other in their range of impossible movements. We moved quickly up steeply into the native pine forests of the ranges so Corrie gets her European flavour as well. Narrow paths clinging to the mountain side then take us gradually up, their surface a Flinders mixture of different rock sizes.

The clinging paths then sidle onto the ridge proper, and twist and turn as the mountain does. Kangaroos jumped across our path as emus who were just as happy to see us, ran up the path. They don't seem to understand that we use this path also and seem to get a shock when we continue to show up. There was no time to get to the Hidden Gorge so there may be a chance to approach it from the other trail.

In Melrose now, where we ended an interesting day with a chat with three young folk who are just starting their walking holiday. We met around a fire place and joined them in celebration of what we'd done and they were about to do.

Why do Emus run towards you?



What a Tree!

Iconic best describes this elegant tree
It grows along Australia's waterways,
The regular floods make life a guarantee
So irrigation could bring on malaise.
The breeding fish choose here to have their fry
Aquatic birds then have their own food choice,
Pythons, bats and birds, just hear them cry
The 'Parrot Superb', it also has a voice.
The Red River Gum supports ecology
Providing food and shelter for their breeding,
It's on our stamp, important culturally
Of all the gums, the red river one is leading.
It's white, with strips of yellow pink and brown,
Its wood is brilliant red as it's renown.

Day 26 – Alligator Gorge

We went to Hidden Gorge yesterday, expecting of course, a gorge, (but it was hours away and the evening was upon us), and, we got a mountain – wahoo! Today we went to Alligator Gorge, expecting a mountain and a gorge and we got yesterday's gorge, we think. The gorge we saw today was hidden so maybe we've seen the hidden one after all. So tomorrow we are going to another entry point for 'Alligator' hoping that we can find the gorge and...a mountain.

So on our walk today we were challenged with those dry rocky creeks, often difficult to traverse. A father and son team successfully addressed any issues they may have had as they went about erecting their tent, while a couple of enthusiastic young girls arrived with their beds in their backpacks. It really needs a couple of days on site before you can see the sites with a high degree of confidence.

We walked 3kms along a roadway that leads to the official starting points, where the road turns into tracks. Down into this dry rocky creek and across to the other side, we joined a track. It seemed we were in the Hidden Gorge already as some of the great orange gorge walls tried to keep hidden, while others seemed to yearn for more exposure. Then there were burnt but very pretty pine trees, like a small forest blending perfectly with the ochre colours.

We had walked more than the average daily walk distance than usual already, so we backtracked (don't like going the same way twice in the one day but we do find things we did not notice the first time) to save rushing to beat the dark. We were also happy to not be camping especially knowing there were to be no fires, although campers are allowed to bring gas.

I think we have a full moon tonight which will give the campers comfort and light, once the gas has been put away. This morning while the sunrise was hidden partially by the clouds, the moon made it easier for me to walk, as I walked up a hill near the water tower. Shiny gums glowed in the streets and in the parks where the grass hugged the tree's base, together creating a stunning contrast.

When I think of red gums, I think of rivers, and when I think of SA, I think of creeks. Last year we followed the beautiful Aussie rivers, mostly flowing well. This year in South Australia we follow the hills and mountains and dry creek beds. But today we saw a water hole, a reminder I am told, of lots more, when the steep mountains offer up torrents of water to the dry earth below.

Rain will bring more reflective moments



Reflections

Reflections turn a picture upside down
Right is left and left is right, you'll see,
Their juxtaposition has them turn around
Looks different, but still they are a tree.
When we reflect it's all about the mind
Although we have the scope to visualise,
Reflections then are very hard to find
Cause they exist alone in those minds eyes.
We look into a mirror, what's to view
External features only are on show,
The sides have swapped but still it looks like you
Reflections are for you to only know.
Reflections are just that, a taste of physics
To change, you have to listen to the critics.

Day 27 – The Terraces and The Narrows

You may not believe me if I tell you we were back at Alligator Gorge today but a new location, and this is where all the action is. Trails go everywhere here – Hidden Gorge; Alligator Gorge which includes the venues in my heading above; The Blue Gum Trail; lookouts for them all; and smaller trails. There was little climbing in the gorge so at the end of the day (the real end!) I paid a brief visit to the lookouts and smaller trails where there were very steep hills.

This track that we've spent so much time looking for is the prize track of the ranges to many people, and they are so varied there seems to be something special in each one. The Narrows refer to a unique gorge about two large river gums long and about three to four goats (head to tail) wide, and are found after a ten minute walk through one of those huge burnt orange gorges.

Walking along a less stoney than usual creek floor, I noticed the fallen large red gums, lying on each other or leaning on a gorge wall. There was the unusual dripping of water from rock shelves that had created some greenery, and the tiniest set of four waterfalls dribbling out as would a slow tap of water. The Terraces looked like asian terraced farming simulating fairly long and wide steps except all that grows here is some coloured mosses and rocks.

Being Sunday and having lots of varied walks in distance and in scenery means a variety of hikers, from young families, through to organised groups, disorganised groups, couples and the odd loner, probably a geologist. Most of our information about the walks come from these people, and it is up to date because they have just been there and usually all we want to know are the simple logistics. It's also a chance to chat a little about similar interests, have a bit of fun and maybe even make new friends.

New friends we won't be making are the first humans to inhabit this area. They were the Adnyamathanha people appropriately meaning - "rock or hill people" whose descendants still reside here, so maybe you can still make friends - they are the Ngadjuri people who lived here for tens of thousands of years witnessed by cave paintings, rock engravings and other artefacts. After Flinders arrived in the early 1800's, a lot changed. Pastoral leases were granted, wheat was grown, copper and coal were mined. The Flinders Ranges watched these developments over the last 200 years finally witnessing the collapse of these industries and bringing the ranges back to the Ngadjuri people.

What goes around comes around



What comes around

I think the holy texts make this same point
What goes around, comes around, it's true,
The former, God would surely not anoint
The latter, will be felt by quite a few.
You're charged, if you do go against the law
A bully often gets his due reward,
You could say it is an evening of the score
A cheeky biker may be even doored.
If this be true then actions we should alter
With knowledge that one day we will regret,
That we're not perfect and one day we'll falter
And this phrase 'comes around' we may forget.
So my advice is "do not go around",
'Cause sure as hell, you'll end up "in the ground".

Day 28 – Alligator Gorge Mountain

Now the gorge has become a mountain. We had to climb down it first to Blue Gum Flat to then join the Kingfisher Trail which took us nearly out to Hidden Camp. We followed a fire trail for some distance, calling in to Kingfisher Flat for lunch where the animals talk to you. Their printed signs say things like “You eat your food and we’ll eat ours”, and “If you wash your clothes in our waterhole, it is like us washing our paws in your jug of drinking water”.

Starting at the top of a mountain is unusual throughout Australia and maybe the world. Every mountain (except for this one), we began at the bottom, climb up, before going down again. You might think this is what happens everywhere but it’s not. I read a book recently on the Blue Mountains, written by a friend of mine, and in it he explains that walks in these mountains start at the top. The road is built on a ridge line and most, or all, are on that ridge, so everyone visits from the top. For me this was Geography 101.

We don’t usually like fire trails because they take away some of the romance from the ‘narrow track’. But we got used to it, spending time imagining it was a track, and then the bush started to look interesting again, and there’s a better chance to photograph an emu, whereas the two young deer were off the ‘cute track’ (earlier) in a second. There was hardly a flat section on this path as it undulated deeply through thick bush that spread out into the surrounding mountains. No-one was on the track today, so even though the track wasn’t intimate, our walk was, so to speak. But after the walk it was lovely to chat with a young french family and swap stories on our french walks.

So it is nearly time for our long walk to come to a close, two more days precisely, the penultimate being tomorrow. It’s been hard, but rewarding (good for the Dopamine), and fortunately we have had no injuries that have hampered our goals. And it has been very special to hear from you with your posts and emails and there are some who read the blog without comments, thanks for taking the time to read.

As far as the PD is concerned, I walk surprisingly well pre meds but post meds has me walking strongly and more alert. My blog replaces my poem as a cognitive exercise. Without meds I struggle with my fine motor skills eg putting a jacket on. I mumble a little but with awareness I am able to improve that instantly. And Corrie – she just keeps walking!

We’re in Warner town, a tiny village by an unused railway line, in a lovely spot by a small lake on Angela and Anthony’s small property.

Methinks in life it is best to start at the bottom



The ups and downs of life

I never knew how strange it was before
I'd always thought the bottom was the start,
You start off low, it seemed to me, a law
I mean you always put the horse before the cart.
With stairs they always seemed to go just up
And going up did often seem quite daunting,
Half empty's down, half full is the best cup
And when you're up it's when you feel like flaunting.
But if your life is up most of the time
The only choice you have is going down,
The body's glad but what about the mind
An easy stroll but could produce a frown.
Our ups and downs are part of daily life
But when we walk them happiness is rife.

Day 29 – Telowie Gorge

It said: “only experienced bushwalkers beyond this point” – this was after we had walked 700 metres through this delightful gorge. It had a feeling about it and where Corrie would say: “I think this is too hard”, she did not. Instead she lifted her leg higher than she normally would to climb over a boulder; she’d crawl through crevices and slide on her bum; walk on sharp sloped rock platforms; and take calculated risks to keep going. There was a feeling of excitement with this hint of the unknown. Neither wanted to stop for a second.

We walked our very many styles for another 1.5kms, a long way in a gorge. The walls were so high and with small caves, so orange, rocks so diverse in shape and size, and wide sloping platforms, while islands of smaller gums peppered what would be small islands when the torrents came. There were pools that covered tracks so we had to make our own, but were ready to wade through them, if the route became impassable.

Which finally it did. I could not safely scale a huge rock and I dare not ask Corrie with the mood she was in – scary! Unusually we were the only ones walking in such a special area, maybe the route could have been a hindrance or simply the fact that it was well off the beaten track. But we were in for a reward for our quiet journey.

We had heard about the rare ‘yellow footed wallaby’ found in ‘hard to get to places’ and therefore this would be one of those places. And there it was fairly high up and already on the move. The wallaby moved slowly, and was easily identified, no, not with its yellow feet but with its clear set of rings on its tail. I took photos but not sure how clear they were, I’ll check after this.

Excited about our sighting, I got down to my less exciting task of finding climbing spots, and soon found another undulating fire trail. The hills spread out from the mountain beside each other and where they meet they form a gully – the base of the undulation and in this case leaving very steep slopes. The result was so manicured, it didn’t look natural, but it certainly was.

The owner of our recent home came over to have a chat, the latest character that helped make our journey rich with his, inspiring self transformation story.

Today is the penultimate day. We finish tomorrow after a successful challenge, and like on our last camino in Portugal, we will be left with that feeling of ‘saudade’ – sad that it’s over but glad that it happened.

See you for our final day tomorrow.



Where there's a Will

Experience, what does it mean, this word
It sounds quite good but let's just check it out,
Employers often say it is preferred
But prison guards probably have some doubt.
The politicians have another view
It's mostly if you're male and have some mates,
While fresh ideas may enter from the new
But are they strapped with certain nasty traits?
So none of these will help us in the bush
Experience is vital when there's risk,
You also need to know how hard to push
When to walk with ease or make it brisk.
We had a chat, decided we had skill,
Importantly we also had 'The Will'.

Day 30 – Mount Maria

Well, we got a full and proper mountain for the last day – Mt Maria – not too big, not too small, just right. Once again we have a different character altogether. We walked through a graveyard, then had to be careful of the balls on/off the golf course. I was wondering whether Maria wanted some privacy with all this happening.

However she still had all her wares on display. She decked the base with rough barked Peppermint Box Trees, which soon mixed with tall Blue Gums (called Yellow Gums on the east coast). Higher up, the gums continue amongst the rocks with those Weeping Sheoaks. In summer the wattles come out to bring some welcome colour.

While it was great to find a mountain in Beautiful Valley, it was a short journey, so it was off to Melrose (also our home for tonight) to climb the substantial foothills of Mount Remarkable. And what a superb day it was, not too cold, not too hot, just right. The foothills were very steep but beautifully wooded with more grass than rocks and it had a sense of mystery, like a fairy land or land of goblins.

Once again there was no-one much on the slopes. It was a camping, caravan sort of place and it was 4.00, when these happy campers go to their homes and prepare for the evening.

We also wanted to taste some other tracks and this was the starting hub for many trails. So I followed the Heysen Trail for a while (Corrie booked in for our last night) until it joined the Mt Remarkable Trail which we had already climbed.

I don't know much about this but there also exists another trail named after someone famous – Mawson. So I walked on his trail for a short while, less stony than most, to try and get a Mawson feel – but it didn't happen. Corrie joined me for a while as we shared stories, laughed, gave directions to trail hungry souls, and munched on our new found muesli bar.

We've loved sharing with all of you and hope you got some enjoyment from being with us for the month of June.

We walked a little over 600 kilometres which is half the great Heysen Trail of 1200 kms, but of course without the very heavy pack. I probably couldn't do it without Corrie and enjoy her company and presence more than she imagines.

Until next year when we will be somewhere in the world...walking, we say farewell and trust that life is great. A hug to all of you from both of us, and, another good thing about technology... it's covid free.

On Fire!!!!



Where we've been

We climbed their mighty mountains and their hills
From Adelaide across the mighty Flinders,
Aided and abetted by some pills
We took the opportunity of winders.
We started off with mountains that were Lofty
Our Anstey was a hill of many paths,
Grass trees on Black Hill were not any softy
'Twas tough at times though we had many laughs.
Remarkable, but then the Dutchman's Stern
Ohlssen Bagge a test as was the Devil,
Mt Mary was the toughest we would learn
With most there was relief when on the level.
And characters we met along the way
Enriched us with their stories many a day.

