

Trip Reports — continued

MAJOR MITCHELL PLATEAU

MAY 30-31, 2009

Thanks to Allen Boyd for taking over leadership of this walk in the forced absence of Phil Harris.

Seven intrepid walkers, Allen and Kerrin, David, Craig, Jean, Anne and Vicki, gathered in the Saturday pre-dawn and travelled in two cars to the meeting place at the start of the Mt William track. Arriving within minutes of each other, one car was ferried to Jimmy Creek camp ground for our return. We hitched up packs, heavy with water, and headed steadily uphill under a leaden sky.

We climbed slowly until Fyans Creek gaining 50m altitude in 2km. Along the way we had glimpses of Cathedral Rock rising several hundred metres above. Anne regaled us with tales from a trip previously taken to Cathedral Rock, and of Hans' unerring navigation through thick bush. (Our bush was much thinned by the recent fires.)

Beyond Fyans Creek the track steepened and became rougher as we climbed nearly 500m in about 4km to reach the car park, then up another 200m along 2km of road to finally reach the summit. We paused here amongst the mist and had our well earned lunches.

After lunch we headed south along a rough four wheel drive track and onto the walking track. Both tracks consisted largely of rock slabs scattered at different angles interspersed with very few flat places! As we followed the escarpment under the lowering clouds, we could catch occasional intriguing glimpses of the plains stretching far to our east. After several kilometres of undulations we descended steeply into Boundary Gap. This is the site of a pleasant but waterless camp, and the junction with the Kalymna Falls track.

Time was passing so we pressed on across the all too

short gap, steeply up the other side, scrambled through a line of cliffs and on to Major Mitchell Plateau. Another kilometre through the regenerating bush brought us to the campsite on First Wannon Creek, where there was water after all; all that extra load for nothing! Camp was quickly set up in the gloaming, food cooked and eaten then the real business began. We stood talking in the cold breeze around our single candle "campfire", drank red, port and whisky and shared chocolate until a 9 o'clock bedtime.

Sunday dawned bright, clear and cold. A few photos after breakfast, then up packs and off again, following the track or cairns through the exposed rocks. The track was not always clearly defined so we had to keep a good watch as we wended our way south along the edge of the escarpment. Views opened across the plains to our left and to the Serra and Victoria Ranges on our right. The effects of bushfire were evident everywhere, charred skeletons of hundreds of banksias, new green and orange-brown leaves sprouting from recovering eucalypts.

The track veered to the south west as we walked. Our lunch time spot was situated on a protruding point with views over the surrounding ranges and nearby helipad. After lunch we descended steeply to the Stockyard Track and hence to the helipad. A further 5km and 500m of descent saw us back at the Grampians road, the car just a short distance away. It wasn't long before packs and boots were off and we were on our way home again.

A very satisfying walk for us all, many thanks to Allen and Kerrin.

David Watkins