

4 PEAKS AND 20 KILOMETRES IN ONE DAY!

On **Sunday 27 May**, 13 keen walkers went on an adventure with the fearless Alan Rogers into the depths of the Mt Archer National Park. It was to be a through-walk, so we did the usual car shuttle drop off at Sunset Drive at 7.30 in the morning and then headed up to the top of Mt Archer to begin the walk. It was incredibly cool and windy as we started off, and many of us made comparisons with trips in Tasmania or NZ in terms of the freshness of the morning.

We started down the graded track till we got to the first lookout. It was a particularly beautiful day, perfect for walking, clear and cool. Once out of the wind we were all happy. We took a turn off the graded track and headed down the hill to the bottom of the valley, to a lovely spot along Moore's Creek. It was sunny and warm and the creek was crystal clear, so we stopped for some smoko at this point.

Off again, this time up and straight up we went (ugh!!) up and over two pretend peaks, (almost) to the top of Mt Risien (**Peak 1**). Again, lovely views along the way in all directions back to Mt Archer, out to Lake Mary in the west and southern views as well, the Byfield ranges and our favourite, Mt Ganter, clearly in view.

With this altitude and with most of the hard climb done through thick bush, we then headed across and up to the ridge at an angle seeking the peak of Mt Nicholson (**Peak 2**), which was not much of a peak really. Kind of flat on top. We seemed to be making really slow time in comparison to the kilometre rate, a reflection of the steep and rugged nature of the climb that we were doing. We needed numerous "breathers" along the way. By this time we were all ready for a good break anyway. It was after midday when we stopped at the top of Mt Nicholson for lunch for a half hour in a spot with little view.



Walking in 5

Then off again, slightly down hill to find the old campsite occupied by someone, with a pretty well equipped kitchen! We then followed the brumby horse trail and pig trails (and we saw some brumbies too) up to the ridge heading towards 554 (**Peak 3**). We encountered wonderful views in all directions, views up to Byfield, down across to the mine site at Mt Chalmers, Mt Wheeler, Pine Mountain, all the volcanic plug mountains and with this altitude, back across to Rockhampton and Stanwell. We also had sea views of the coast and the islands. It was just stunning really, in amongst the lemon scented gums, blackboys and cabbage gums in the bright clear sunshine.

On we walked, with much flat walking being done on top of the ridge at the stage. This allowed for the usual conversations along the way as we walked. There were small rises and falls in gradient but the walking was generally flat till we got to Mt Elida (**Peak 4**), then, straight up we went again to the top. We were all quite relieved to find that while the climb was steep the distance was not too far to the top.

As we stopped and looked around behind and to the west you could see that we were effectively walking around to the other side of Mt Archer on the ridges of the mountains closest to it in a semi circular fashion. It was mid afternoon.



A Bush Residence

From the top of Mt Elida we then started our descent. Now that sounds easier than it actually was. It was very steep, very hard to see underfoot, with hidden boulders and rubble, many holes in the ground, tripping vines, big logs, slippery bits, head high long grass, yucky thick, speargrass and lantana all the way. It was also very long and we seemed to be walking downhill forever.

In case you haven't got the idea, it was horrible! By this time, we were all getting a little footsore and joint sore - many of us suffering from the onslaughts of speargrass in our boots, clothing, skin and so on. We kept soldiering on with the promise of a graded road below us (in your dreams I was thinking by this time). Cheryl brightly reminded me, "Yes, there is a road down there". Finally, it was true and we all celebrated. We found the road! It was 4.00 in the afternoon and the shadows were looming in, so we were all relieved to be off this ridge. We had walked around 12 kilometres in 8 and a half hours!

Now we thought our walk was nearly over, but not quite. We then had at least another 7 kilometres to walk along the road following the creek all the way, to join the track that comes down from the Mt Archer National Park walk. This we did in 1 and a half hours! By this time Gary had discarded his joggers, full of speargrass spikes. Funnily enough, this time of day on a walk is sometimes the most enjoyable. The hardest part of the day is over, the humour sets in, the light is beautiful and we are all relieved to be going home.

So on we walked, easy ground to cover, but by this stage, we were all feeling pretty tired. We all walked on, fantasizing about hot baths, massages, wine, what food to have for dinner and so on as we trudged the last few kilometres.

We finally walked out of the park wondering if we might need our torches, to meet the cars at 5.30 pm just before dark. What a big day out we had, a good endurance test walk actually. A walk, accident free, with some definite challenges, with great weather, great views, and great company. Another experience to remember...

Merridy