

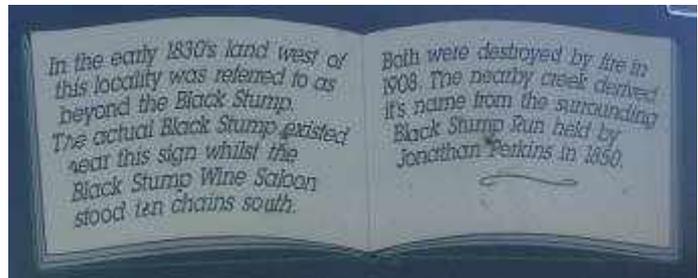
## Warrambungles, Easter 6-9 April 2007

Participants: Ian (Leader) & Rhonda McKinley	Rodeo
Jack & Pam Simpson	Pajero
Shrek, Claire, Bec & Jen Barker	Pajero
Stuart, Shirley, Ashley & Jordan Symons	Commodore
Siva, Prem, Prea & Miesh Moodley & Shivani	Challenger
Ian (Reporter), Luisa, Jordan & Leya Reid	Pajero

We arrived at the meeting point, Lithgow Maccas, 20 minutes early but, of course, everyone else arrived earlier. (The Symons and Moodley families were planning to meet us at the campground at Coonabarabran the next day.) After some refreshments we hit the road. Our first stop was Mudgee. We went to the High Valley Wine & Cheese Company because Ian had been there before and liked it. It seems to have changed hands since then and can no longer be recommended. They were very reluctant to give samples and what they did eventually give was tiny.

After that disappointment we continued on to Gulgong, where we stopped for lunch. This is a delightful town with many well preserved old buildings lining narrow streets. We went to the bakery, which had nice range of options. Ian Mc said that his hamburger was delicious, with a fresh baked roll.

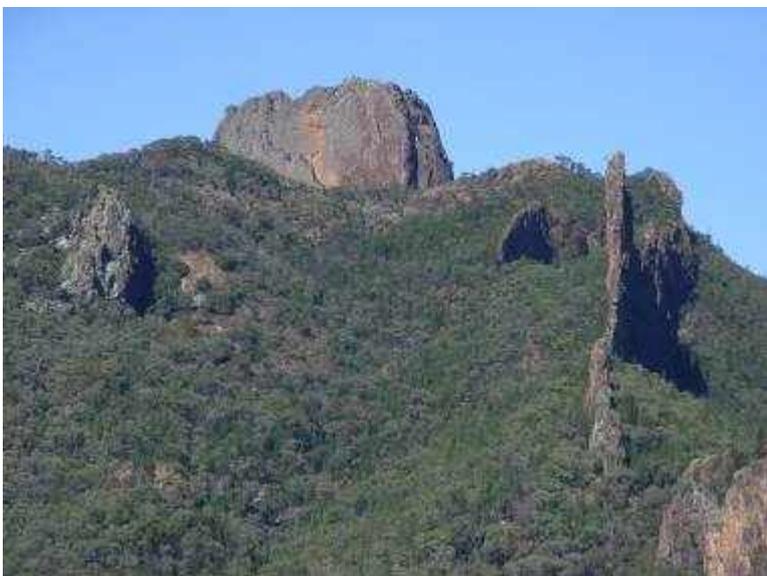
Continuing north we stopped again to see the Black Stump. What is there is a black painted stump to represent the original, which was burned in a fire in 1908, and a plaque telling the story:



From there we made our way to

Coonabarabran. There we stopped at the Information Centre to get some maps before heading out to the Warrambungles Holiday Camp, on the road to the Warrumbungle National Park. We were able to set up in a nice area at the bottom of the campground. The toilets and showers were clean and welcome. There was plenty of firewood to be found around the campground. After setting up tents and campers and having dinner we settled down to an evening swapping tall stories.

Siva and family had planned to get arrive early on Saturday morning so that they could join us on the walk. There was no mobile reception at the campground so Shrek drove almost into town to phone him. He found out that Siva was still in Sydney so we drove into the park. We stopped for a look around the visitor centre before parking in the Pincham carpark. Everyone bravely set off on the 14.5km hike.



The going was easy to start with, on a very well made path following the Spirey Creek. The Reids decided to make it more challenging by taking a side trip around Gould's Circuit, taking in 2 peaks, Febar Tor and Macha Tor. The views were worth the climbs. Both peaks had good views towards the Breadknife and the Grand High Tops, from different angles. The Reids rejoined the main path and went in pursuit of the rest of the group. A short way along the path started to climb

more steeply, including a long series of steel stairs up to the base of the Breadknife.

The main party stopped for lunch just past the Breadknife. The Breadknife is a very narrow ridge of rock and is the most remarkable and distinctive feature of the Warrambungles. The Reids caught up with them as they climbed to the Grand High Tops after lunch. They waited there to enjoy the view and the Reids had their lunch. From the Grand High Tops there is magnificent view over the Breadknife, Beloungery Spire, Febar and Macha Tors and a large part of the park.



It was a short walk to Dagda Gap. From there it was 2 km shorter to return via the Dagda Short Cut, largely retracing our steps back to the carpark, than doing a loop via West Spirey Creek. I convinced everyone that it was better to continue around the loop and minimise walking over the same path. I also assured them that this path was not as steep as the way we came. As we continued along I realised that it was not as gentle as I remembered but I was not lynched when we returned to camp.

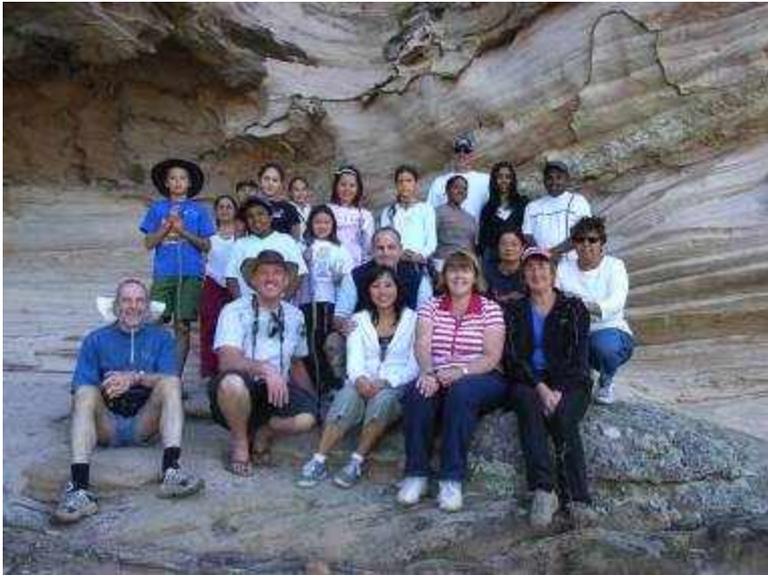
The Barkers and the Reids felt that they deserved ice creams so they headed into Conabarabran before heading back to camp. Meanwhile the Symons had arrived at the camp and set up their tent. They then went off to check out the Siding Spring Observatory. They got back to camp soon after the rest of us.

That evening everyone was tired and sore but proud of their achievement. The walk is advertised as 14.5kms but Shrek's handheld GPS indicated that we had walked further than that. It was very steep in parts but everyone agreed that it was worthwhile. A number also thought that doing it once in a lifetime was enough.

After dinner the Moodley family came to join us around the campfire. They were staying at a motel just down the road from the campground. We had another great evening swapping yarns around the campfire and partaking of various refreshments.



On Sunday morning we all headed into Coonabarabran and then north along the Newell. We turned off at the signpost for Pilliga Pottery and followed a dusty road for a few kilometres. The pottery is in a nice setting. There are many pieces on display in the yard and many more in the showrooms inside. Their pottery is unique and very nice. While there we were able to see some pots being thrown on a wheel (made), patterns being scratched into them and then being painted with glaze. Almost everyone went away with a piece of pottery, some of the pieces very large.



From there we headed back to the highway and continued north. Following directions given at the information centre in Coonabarabran we turned off onto an unmarked track. A short way along the track we parked and walked around a loop a little more than 1 km. This took us past numerous beautiful wind carved sandstone caves, featuring magical patterns and shapes. We had lunch in the car park and discussed plans for the afternoon. Back in Coonabarabran we all went in to Crystal Kingdom, a gemstone display and shop. It was interesting but no one was tempted to buy.

Most of the group headed back to the campground for a quiet afternoon but the Symons and Reids headed into the Warrumbungle National Park. We went to Whitegum Lookout, which gives a magnificent view into the park for a very short walk. We then went for another short walk near the visitor centre.

After an early dinner everyone headed out to the Skywatch Observatory. We were having a game of putt-putt/mini golf before going into the observatory. We then found out that the lights did not work so we had to play in the dark. It made the game very interesting. After the game we went into an exhibition on space and space exploration.

After enough time to explore that thoroughly we went outside for our turn at the telescopes. We were with a much larger group than we expected. We went into the observatory building where their biggest telescope is housed. This was focused on Saturn. We had to wait about half an hour for our turn to look. During that time the telescope was twice knocked out of alignment and we had to wait while our guide repositioned it again. Saturn, with its rings, was very clear but very small through the telescope. Some suggested that it looked like a sticker stuck on the end of the telescope. After that we went outside where two smaller telescopes were set up. One was focused on the Orion Nebula and the other on the twin stars of Alpha Centauri but these were very small. Back at camp, Siva brought a curry over to share around.

On the return trip to Sydney on Monday we stopped at a park in Mudgee for lunch. It took about half an hour to get through Richmond but other than that we had a relatively easy run home for Easter Monday.

Thanks Ian for a great weekend and thanks to everyone for their company.

