



## A Wonderful Place - A Memory Set 15

(661 words)

Text and Photography by Rosemary Wait

### Special words

into, through, where, friends, were, kilometres, Adelaide, house, there, two, after, height, great, branches, metres, light-hearted, vast, thought, would, didn't, many, rubble, leave, their, are, fiercely, determined, water, waterhole, hour, last, flood, course, boulders, one, settle, purple, fiery, although, shone, could

Walking back to the homestead was tough, very different from our trek into the range. I had found out about a rough track through the bush near the sheep station where I was staying with friends. We were in the Flinders Ranges several hundred kilometres north of Adelaide. Our old house was on the track I was following and it twisted into the range at the back of Arkaba Station.

There, we were told, was the meeting place of two creeks which combined to form the mighty Hookina Creek. Mostly it was dry but after heavy rain it thundered down with a force which carried whole gum trees at an astonishing height. I have seen great trunks and branches stuck three metres high in other gum trees. In flood, the creek also grew wide and the red mud was spread all around.

So as we set out, the going was easy. We were fresh and light-hearted and light-footed. It was several years since I had walked here and I delighted in seeing this place again.

This country was amazing. The mountains changed colours as the day progressed. At midday they were stark, rough and strong colours of brown and yellow in the harsh light. Behind us on the plain was a vast area which had been cleared for farming as long ago as the 1870s when some optimists thought that if they planted wheat and ran sheep, rain would follow. It didn't and the land is now studded with a few small homesteads and many more piles of rubble where farmers were forced to leave their land.

Even further away are crystal, salt lakes shining fiercely under the intense sun. We trudged on and on, determined to find the place where all three creeks came together. Our lunch eaten and most of our water drunk, my mate and I began to feel weary when we finally came upon the waterhole which marked the place we wished to find. Quickly we stripped off and jumped in. It was cold and refreshing and we were tempted to stay, but we also knew that we had to return to the homestead before the light went.

For the first hour we had high spirits but then we noticed more and more, the roughness of the track, the hardness of the stones and our increasingly sore feet. In the last flood the creek had changed its course and the boulders now seemed larger and harder to get round. The one good thing was that the heat faded as the day wore on as a slight breeze made us feel better. Our water was finished and we were getting very hungry and we still had far to go but we were definitely slowing down.

The day was closing in with shadows becoming longer and the parrots and galahs beginning to settle in the gums by the creek. Some hills grew deep shadows and yet others were lit up by the sun going down.

They turned to gold, orange and then deep purple. And then the sun really began to set with the same fiery colours that we had seen in the hills. The sky had just enough cloud to make the whole scene

spectacular. The birds quietened and darkness came. Without light the track was tough to follow along the creek bed. The stars came out but we were in the shadows and although the sky was very clear and brilliant it didn't help us much.

A light shone ahead. As we had climbed the bank of the creek it popped up over our horizon. It was far off but we thought it was the homestead and we were right. We could also hear the shouts of our friends and suddenly we saw the flare of the outdoor barbeque pit alight. A bonfire lit up the sky and all our tiredness and the roughness of the track forgotten, we began to run.

## Questions/Activities

After reading the text ask students one or more of the following questions. If students are working in pairs, alternate Partner 1, then Partner 2.

- How do you know that the writer is retelling their own experiences?
- The country is described as 'rough'. Find an example that shows that life on this land could be rough or tough.
- The writer likes the colours of the landscape. Find words that show this.
- Have you ever been somewhere there were few or no people?  
Explain
  - What it felt like
  - What it looked like
  - Did you enjoy it?
- Do you enjoy crowded places more? Describe one of these to your partner. Try to use words that say what the scene looked like, sounded like and smelt like.
- What place would you think of as wonderful? Tell your partner or teacher and say exactly why it is or was wonderful.