

# DARE'S HILL CIRCUIT TOUR

Hallett - Terowie via Dare's Hill (91.5km)

## Distances shown are progressive kilometres from Hallett Post Office.

**0.0 Hallett Post Office** (Barrier Highway, traveling north).

**0.2** Turn right (golf club on right).

**0.6** Turn left.

**1.8** Hills in view ahead include Ulooloo Hill and Mt Scrub; those to right include Mt Bryan.

**2.5 Planoleche HS** on left.

**3.3** Road junction; turn hard right. Commence gradual ascent of slopes which are outliers of the range dominated by Mt Bryan.

**6.2** Among the hills, where there is more native vegetation. The drier climate east of the Barrier Highway is already reflected in the gradual development of mallee-type habit among the trees.

**8.1** Road is traveling part-way up a hillside, giving spectacular views to the left towards Ulooloo Hill and Mt Scrub.

**12.0** Passing through **Peppermint Gully** among stands of Peppermint box.

**12.7** Bear right on major road (minor road goes straight on). Peppermint box mallee now forms dense woodland. Watch for parrots, cockatoos and other birdlife in all woodland areas.

**14.1** Emerge from Gully; woodland instantly gives way to open grasslands.

**15.7** Good view of **Mt Bryan** to right.

**16.8** T-junction. Turn right.

**17.5** T-junction. Turn left. Immediately pass through the site of **Mt Bryan East**. Abandoned buildings on the right were a school and church. This little community is best remembered as the birthplace of the remarkable adventurer and Polar explorer Sir Hubert Wilkins.

A regional history, *Razorback Range Country*, has this to say of him: *George Hubert Wilkins was born at Mt Bryan East, youngest of 13 children. He went to the local school, then continued his studies at*

*the School of Mines in Adelaide, studying electrical engineering. He went to England in 1909, where he became interested in aviation, and spent three years with an Arctic expedition as a photographer. In 1916 he joined the 'Great War'; following the war he took part in the famous England to Australia air race - which won fame for Charles Kingsford-Smith. Hubert Wilkins was unfortunate to crash his plane 'Kangaroo' at Crete.*

*In 1927 he made several unsuccessful attempts to fly over the Arctic, and was stranded on an ice-pack, having to walk for 13 days to reach habitation. Later his mission was successful, and he made several flights over the Arctic region, receiving a Knighthood for his work.*

**19.3** Major creek crossing - **Dustholes Creek**.

**21.5 - 22.5** Well wooded country with mallee. Note creek to right with its spectacular erosion chasm. The road then crosses a creek bed: numerous watercourses spill out of the hills here, helping to explain the heavy vegetation.

**23.3** Cross **Goyder's Line**. Significant ecological change occurs here. New forms of shrubbery are seen; Peppermint box takes on true multi-stemmed mallee habitat and saltbush appears for the first time.

George W Goyder was Surveyor-General of South Australia at the time when a rapidly-increasing population was putting pressure on the Government to open up more land for agriculture. In 1865, when many pastoral runs were in the grip of drought, Goyder was sent north to discover which stations would be eligible for drought relief.

On his return, Goyder depicted the border line of the affected areas with a looping line across a map of the colony. It became known simply as Goyder's Line.

Though the Line was not intended to convey anything else, its relevance to rainfall characteristics - and therefore to farming potential - turned it into something of a bombshell.

Goyder fuelled the problem by claiming bluntly that everywhere beyond the Line was suitable only for pastoralism and even some pockets on the other side would not support farming. More and more pressure was put on the Government to remove

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this obstacle to expansion. Eventually, in 1874, the Government backed down and began surveying land beyond Goyder's Line; the farmers could then make their own judgment. Some made an over-optimistic job of that, heading north during good seasons and walking off the land when the dry years returned.

The fact remains that, considering the original nature of Goyder's Line, and the crude and sparsely-detailed maps with which he worked, it has stood the test of time as a surprisingly accurate delineation of the 10 inch line of rainfall, characterised by the very changes in vegetation which you see at this point.

**27.0 Summit of Dares Hill.** Hills in view ahead and to right include the Wonna Range. Chinamans Hat Hill and Ketchowla Hill. Spectacular views continue during the first portion of the steep and winding descent. During final portion of the descent, very dense woodland is seen below - this is the narrow valley of Piltimitiappa Creek.

**29.2 Descent ends.** Immediately plunged into mallee woodland of Piltimitiappa Valley. Shortly the road enters Collinsville station over a grid. Next few kilometres are dominated by **Piltimitiappa Creek** and tributary watercourses.

**32.4 Piltimitiappa HS** ruins on right, a property started by William Dare In the 1850s and one of the first homesteads in the region. Associated old windmill and stone tank are to the left. During the next 1 to 2km the road is often among dense and attractive woodland.

**34.0** Emerge into open rolling country. Quite different appearance with shrubbery, including saltbush, dotting the hills. This change is influenced by departure from the siltstone formation which has existed since Dustholes Creek, and entering the older Tapley Hill formation - predominantly slate. The effects of this change soon become more evident as the landscape opens up to reveal long views.

**35.0** Gate

**37.4** Road bears left (right fork is to **Collinsville HS**, centre of a world-renowned stud ram property). Climb to a crest from which there is a long view

ahead to the Wonna Range; then descend to the very flat alluvial plain created by one of the main watercourses in the district, Wonna Creek.

**40.6** Cross Wonna Creek.

**40.8** Gate

**42.0** Gate

**42.4** Gate. Road junction beside **Mallett HS**. Mallett Reservoir is seen ahead right, marking the site of the surveyed township of Mallett which was never developed. While minor tracks seem to wend this way and that, it is basically a T-Junction; take the major road to the right, passing the reservoir on your left.

**42.8** Gate

**43.8** Gate

**45.4** To the right is **Dares Windmill** and its very large old stone tank, one of the historic landmarks of the district. The road is slowly climbing off the Wonna Creek plain: shortly it climbs more markedly as it crosses back into the Tapley Hill formation. It is then high plateau country, completely open grasslands.

**47.2** Gate.

Road then climbs to a saddle between the hills, heralding a district in which land-form changes provide a succession of different natural features. As the saddle opens onto a high plateau, **Mt Pullen** (better known as **Ketchowla Hill**) is to the left. Note the large amounts of outcropping.

Shortly beyond Mt Pullen you leave the Tapley Hill formation and join a siltstone block at a north-south running fault line (not visible). An abandoned windmill and stone storage tank is on the left, then an unusual formation is seen to the right with pillar-like outcropping on the ridges.

The country is still very open, with saltbush and bluebush the dominant vegetation. Soon, with the plateau beginning to descend shallowly to the east, a vast view opens up in that direction, beyond the plateau and across the flat eastern plains. You are traveling over the extreme eastern edge of the Adelaide Geosyncline - that is, the huge area of accumulated sedimentary rock which includes the

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Mt Lofty and Flinders Ranges. The flat plains to the east mark the edge of the wide Murray Basin which stretches into New South Wales and Victoria.

**49.8** Gate. Thick saltbush.

**51.1 Ketchowla HS** on left. Note early station buildings just beyond present homestead. When these notes were compiled (December 1989) the gravel road surface here contained scattered pieces of specular haematite (a form of iron ore).

From Ketchowla the road continues to bear left, around the Mt Pullen hills, and travels back across the ranges.

**54.1** Road crosses a creek and bears hard right. There is a windmill and stone tank here, among a rugged scenario dominated by extensive steeply-bedded rock outcrop and the winding course of a creek. Known as **The Springs** because of permanent water in the vicinity, it marks the point where the road re-crosses the fault line to the Tapley Hill formation. It is also where Christopher Gilles, father of explorer Ernest and Alfred, established his first Ketchowla headstation.

Away from the road, rocks along the creek possess examples of Aboriginal art.

Over the next kilometre or two the road emerges onto a plain.

**55.5** Wonna Range dead ahead, with the isolated peak of **Chinamans Hat Hill** in front of the main range.

**56.2** Ahead right, at about 15km, are the long ridges and peaks of the **Porcupine Range**.

**58.0 - 63.0** Dense mallee woodland.

**63.0** Grid. Sign of vegetation change with mallee beginning to disappear and saltbush becoming patchy.

**66.9** Track on right leads to **Pandappa HS**. To this station in 1859 came Peter Waite, straight off the ship from Britain. It was the start of a pastoral career which culminated in Waite donating to the State his Urrbrae property and other land, resulting in the creation of Urrbrae Agricultural High School and the renowned Waite Institute.

The road now winds across a level plain. The **Wonna Range** hills are to the left, the Porcupine Range ahead right.

**69.8** Grid. **Pandappa Conservation Park** is now on the left, beside the road. It extends to the northerly ridges of the Wonna Range. There are no internal tracks or visitor facilities. The Park was dedicated to preserve characteristic semi-arid vegetation of the area. Varying from open scrub to tall shrubland, the major vegetation consists of red and white mallee, summer red mallee, yorrell, gilja and mallee box (all forms of eucalypt), together with various forms of saltbush and bluebush, false sandalwood, bullock bush and smaller shrubs. Echidnas, western grey and red kangaroos and euros inhabit the Park. Woodland birds, parrots and cockatoos and occasional birds of prey may be seen.

**72.8** The route begins a shallow descent, and at around 74km emerges onto the broad open flats of **Waupunyah Plain**. A long view down the plain is evident to the left, beyond which is the massive block of hills which include Mount Bryan, Ulooloo Hill and Mount Scrub. The plain is, in fact, practically ringed by hills. Some cattle may be seen in the area.

**79.1** Road in on right - it leads to **Franklyn HS** past the site of another surveyed township (Franklyn) which was not developed. As with Mallett the survey as made at time when expected closer settlement would see an influx of many wheat farmers; it soon became palpably clear that grain crops could not be grown here, thus the larger pastoral stations remained and towns were no longer justified.

**80.4** Edge of Waupunyah Plain. Road begins to climb and is immediately plunged into dense mallee woodland. For 3km the road climbs and winds up the east flank of the hills, but the expected long views back across the plain do not eventuate because of the forest-like character of the mallee.

**83.4** Over crest at top of hill; instantly emerge from woodland into open grassland scattered with low shrubs.

**85.3** Y-junction. Both roads end up at th Barrier Highway. Take the left fork for direct route to Terowie.

**91.5** Reach Barrier Highway. Continue straight over highway into **Terowie** to explore this well-preserved old railway town.