
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

Volume 14 Issue 2

February 2004

BOWENS CREEK

Our January Walk

Mt IRVINE TO BOWENS CREEK

Friday 16th January 2004

Now I like a cuppa as much as the next person, nevertheless 24 gallons in one session?! That is 110 litres – the quantity of tea recorded as having been consumed at the official opening in January 1935 of Bowens Creek Bridge, our destination for this walk. Caffeine overload was obviously not considered a worry.

This walk was planned for December however inclement weather that day caused its abandonment. Sixteen walkers gathered on Bowens Creek Road near “Rutherglen” at Mt Irvine in that mystical atmosphere of light misty rain. Libby organised a car shuffle of available 4WD’s to have sufficient vehicles at the bridge to obviate the need to walk back up the hill - what a great idea! Many thanks to those members who kindly provided the vehicles.

We set off in very pleasant walking conditions and although the route was all downhill from here the experience most certainly was not. One of the first wildflowers spotted was the



Summer in the Bush

MT IRVINE

Lesser Flannel Flower (*Actinotus minor*) its tiny white velvety bracts glowing in the subdued light. Nearby there were numerous examples of the Blunt-leaf Wattle (*Acacia obtusifolia*) displaying their pale yellow spikes of flowers.

At a left hand bend in the road a short detour led into an enchanting glade of young Smooth-barked Apple (*Angophora costata*) their newly exposed trunks

wonderful shades of pink and grey while at their base lay multi-coloured carpets of discarded bark. On the high side of the road stood a much older Angophora displaying the characteristic base looking as though it had been melted and poured over the rock shelf. Nestled snugly in a forked trunk nearby was a Snake Flower Orchid (*Cymbidium suave*) its long strappy leaves glistening with moisture. The tiny white flowers of Epacris, possibly Mueller’s Heath (*Epacris muelleri*) illuminated the banks beside the carriageway.

Hot pink blooms of Grass-leaf Trigger Plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*) decorated the roadside as we reached a point where a magnificent view across Bowens Creek opened up revealing the road snaking its way up the opposite side of the valley toward Bilpin. Delicate clouds of mist floated across the scene adding a softness to the rugged view.

Angophoras were certainly making their presence obvious on this day. On the nearby steep hillside numerous ancient examples stood, their giant trunks of pinks, oranges and reds mottled with light grey and moistened by the rain gave the impression of massive marble columns rising from the forest floor. As always in nature these scenes of grandeur are tempered by smaller details, for here also were a few Flannel Flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*) flashes of white scattered below the brilliant red flowers of the ubiquitous Mountain Devil (*Lambertia formosa*). Numerous examples of the Grey Spider-flower (*Grevillia buxifolia* ssp. *buxifolia*) were also noted, leaving no doubt as to how their common name was derived.

As we moved deeper into the valley we were treated to the marvellous sight of a large grove of Christmas Bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*) lighting up the setting with their abundant rich red sepals. We were later favoured, when looking down from the other side of the valley, with a wondrous floral display by its larger cousin the Coachwood (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*).

It was just past this grove of Christmas Bush that Libby led us off the road and down the hillside via some steps and footholds hewn into the rockface to a cave formed by a rock overhang. Imagine if you will the late June weather in this isolated location 107 years ago. Three nineteen year olds, Basil Knight-Brown, Harold B Morley and Charles Scrivener accompanied by Charles's father, C R Scrivener used this cave as a camp site while they surveyed land at Mt Irvine. Why one would choose to undertake such a task in the depth of a Mt Irvine winter escapes me however there must have been a good reason for the timing. Their efforts were rewarded with the granting of 1000 acres for conditional purchase by the Lands Board. This cave was apparently also used by the construction workers while building Bowens Creek Road.

Apart from its historical interest the rock formations in the cave are quite beautiful. The

unusually deep gold sandstone has thin veins of ironstone threaded through it in intricate patterns. Wafer thin ironstone ledges protrude from the rear wall. The well carved steps to the cave display that mindset of the times that if a job was worth doing it was worth doing well.

Back on the road we were now in a much moister environment notwithstanding the light rain. A huge swathe of Pouched Coral-fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*) covered an embankment and in the gully below the road the dark green foliage of the Cedar Wattle (*Acacia elata*) formed a perfect background for the clusters of cream flowers. Tree ferns were now abundant. Inspection of a stone and timber culvert meticulously built over a small creek and still serving its purpose again demonstrated the workmanship of the times. In this area was an example of the Purple Fan-flower (*Scaevola ramosissima*) its five petalled flowers supported on wiry branchlets.

Suddenly we were at Bowens Creek Bridge. As light rain was still falling it was decided we would seek dry refuge under the bridge for lunch. What memories of youthful adventures under bridges, those secret places, came flooding back. Walking bare foot home from primary school and inspecting the mud nests of the Fairy Martins, peering into those inverted igloos to watch chicks developing. Then the first adolescent experiments with smoking, dry grass rolled in gum leaves - definitely not recommended - later again there was that memorable encounter with Leonie Ba.....but I digress! Lunch was fairly uneventful except for the discovery of a leech on John Young's leg which was quickly dispatched with some salt. What a pity all of society's leeches can't be dealt with so easily.

Following lunch six of the party decided to call it a day while the remaining ten walked up three legs of the zig zag on the Bilpin side. This section contrasts with the Mt Irvine side with its sheer rock faces and wind eroded, caves displaying fantastic sculptural effects. There were some young *Casuarinas* on the

higher slopes, the misty rain forming shimmering beads on the weeping needles - a stunning effect. Also present here were numerous specimens of the Narrow-leaf Geebung (*Persoonia linearis*) with their rough flaky barked trunks and a mix of cylindrical yellow sheaths of unopened flowers clustered with the four petalled open blooms near the tips of the slender branches.

On reaching a particularly well decorated wind worn overhang we paused awhile to take in the expansive valley views and then decided to return to the bridge. The drive back to the starting point, approximately 300 vertical metres above the bridge, allowed a passing revision of the days effort. Another wonderful few hours in the ever changing, always enchanting Australian bush. A great start to a new year of much anticipated bushwalks.

[A wonderful source of detailed information on the building of Bowens Creek Road and the Bridge along with general historic details of the district is 'Mount Irvine a History' published by The Mount Irvine Progress Association 1997]

John Cardy provided this detailed and descriptive account of this damp but delightful walk. In future unless otherwise acknowledged he will be our main reporter for our walks. We are very appreciative of his contributions which always highlight the most significant and valuable experiences on the walks.

Our February Walk

THE ENGINEERS' TRACK off the DARLING CAUSEWAY between Bell & Mt Victoria.

FRIDAY 20TH FEBRUARY 2004

This will be a new walk for our group. It is not a long walk, nor is it spectacular and while the track follows an up and down course the grade

is gradual. Historically this track is of great interest as it was first constructed when the NSW Government was considering using the Grose Valley as a route for the railway across the mountains. These surveys took place in the late 1850's and it is a complicated but fascinating story. Fortunately this plan never eventuated. Andy Macqueen has written about it in detail in his book, "Back from the Brink" 'The Blue Gum Forest and the Grose Wilderness'. He calls the Chapter 'The great railway foolery'!

MEET at 9 30a.m. on the Darling Causeway opposite the turn off to Little Hartley and Collitts Inn. On the railway side of the road, the eastern side you can drive in and park near the railway. Or

MEET at Merry Garth at 9.00a.m.

Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea and plenty of water if it is warm.

FURTHER WALK

Friday, 19th March 2004: To the Grand Canyon at Blackheath. This has always been a very popular walk although the last section is a very steady pull upwards. It is a rare glimpse into a canyon which are usually inaccessible for our group.

Future walks will be planned soon. If you have a special preference do tell us. We are always happy to include any walk which is within our capacity.

BUSH CARE

There was a very pleasing attendance in January at Galwey Lane where we continued to remove those Hollies and Ivy and the tiresome blackberries. We also met the Blue Mts City Council Bush Regeneration Group who have made incredible inroads to the weed problem at Waterfall Creek, a task beyond the resources of our Group.

In February we meet at on 13th February 2004 opposite Rimon Cottage in Waterfall Road Mt Wilson at 9.00a.m.

In March we meet on 12th March 2004 in Sloan Reserve Mt Wilson at 9.00 a. m.

As always we work for about 3 hours and anyone is most welcome to join us. Those who come always enjoy the companionship and the friendly atmosphere we experience and the welcome morning tea.

Contact Beth Raines for further information on 4756 2121.

MEMBERS' NEWS

Some of our members continue to have difficulties with illness in their families. We send our warmest thoughts to Anne Clarke whose mother has been a great concern; to Norma & Kevin Quinn whose son experienced a serious accident not long ago; to Barry Freeman who spent some time in hospital recently but is now recovering; we hope Helen Freeman's mother will gradually improve after a very long & difficult period. She still remains in hospital.

It is pleasing to hear that Ron Naylor is making some progress after many weeks in hospital.

FOR OUR FEBRUARY WALK

Contact **Libby Raines** on 4756 2121 or **Mary Reynolds** on 4756 2006 or **Helen Freeman** on 4756 2053.

We wish to acknowledge the assistance of **C & W Printing Mort Street Lithgow** with the printing of this newsletter.