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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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**HAPPY VALLEY,  
AND CATHEDRAL**

## Our February Walk

**Friday 20th February 2004**

Today, just as happened way back in 1860 the Engineers Track was abandoned, on this occasion for very good reasons. The prediction of very high temperatures and an extreme fire risk resulting in a total fire ban caused Libby to take the very sensible action of postponing our exploration of the Engineers Track to another day.

It was decided instead to seek out the coolness of Waterfall Creek. The plan was to follow the track down to Happy Valley then walk, wade or scramble upstream to explore this moist green world.

Eight walkers set off from the picnic area initially moving through open forest where Libby pointed out the rainforest species slowly regenerating among the eucalypt woodland. Soon we entered the more enclosed environment of the rainforest. At first the canopy is fairly sparse and the intricate tracery of intermingled branches overhead is highlighted by the sunlight penetrating the



Autumn in the Bush

## WATERFALL CREEK CREEK MT WILSON

partial covering of greenery. Beyond the junction of the track which leads down to Cathedral Creek stand some superb examples of the Rough Tree Fern (*Cyathea australis*). The fine lacy pattern of their fronds were beautifully accentuated against the blue sky.

As we moved deeper into the rainforest and the canopy became more dense the ground cover plants became very

scattered, replaced by deep layers of leaf litter. Trees here were sending their roots across the forest floor in search of nourishment, resulting in a magnificent buttressing effect at their bases. The lichens and mosses clinging to these trunks and serpentine roots completed the "fairy tale" picture of an enchanted forest.

Soon the track began to descend more steeply and a nearby Pepperbush (*Tasmannia insipida*) provided a rare splash of contrasting colour in this green environment with its clusters of bright red berries beginning to ripen atop their slender stems. The path winds gently down the hillside where majestic examples of Water Vines (*Cissus sp*) are encountered. Their thick trunks display complex helical spirals where they once embraced long gone tree trunks and branches on their journey to the sunlight beyond the canopy far above. Laying forlornly on the

slope is the hollow half shell of an ancient fallen tree trunk. Massive in scale and encrusted with mosses and fungi as it slowly decays and returns to mother earth it gives the appearance of the remains of a war canoe abandoned by mythical warriors of an age lost in the mists of the dreamtime.

The track now descends in earnest, zig zagging past a series of two tiered rock overhangs on the uphill side. Some of these overhangs, usually the upper tiers, are quite dry and devoid of any vegetation while others are carpeted with the dark green Strap Fern (*Blechnum patersonii*). Rock faces and tree trunks here are decorated with the Rock Felt-Fern (*Pyrrosia rupestris*). The discarded sepals of the towering Coachwoods (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*) enhance gloomy nooks and crannies in gnarled tree trunks and the little five pointed stars are so numerous on some areas of the dark forest floor that looking down is like gazing into an earthbound galaxy.

The pleasant sound of running water and a distinct drop in temperature indicates we are close to our first port of call. As we descend the last slippery embankment George decides the quickest way between points A and B is Zzzziip, Diana's quick thinking in grabbing his legs as he slid past prevented him from possibly ending up at point C(reek). After a short halt to proceedings while George regained his composure (along with his glasses and watch) we settled down for morning tea at this magical spot called Happy Valley.

Just as a level of calmness had returned to the group our tearless leader Libby was attacked by a leech disguised as an apple seed or was it an apple seed disguised as a leech? Whatever, it was very quickly and unceremoniously despatched!

Refreshed and relaxed we began our upstream trek through this enchanting valley, initially meandering between Soft Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) and King Ferns (*Todia barbara*) then negotiating shallow pools

surrounded by banks covered with mosses of all descriptions. We then waded thigh deep through the icy water of a long narrow pool between the vertical rock faces formed by this tiny stream relentlessly cutting deeper into the valley. The creek enters the far end of this pool via a beautiful little waterfall, its silver drop highlighted against the dark rocks.

The next shallow pool we encountered was home to a couple of bright orange yabbies, one quite large. In fishermen's language it was "at least this long" - indicated by widely varying distances between two hands! What a delight to see such a mature specimen. A short distance further on a lesser creek enters on the right (possibly Cathedral Creek) and we climb onto a high midstream embankment. This area is magical - tree ferns with wonderfully curved trunks, the remains of swirl pools in the rock walls, dark heavily vegetated slopes low in the valley and high on the cliff top a eucalypt takes on a surreal appearance - shimmering silver leaves in the bright sunlight. We pause here awhile absorbing the atmosphere before returning to the base of the track.

After putting the steeper parts of the track behind us we chose suitable resting places beside the track and settled down for lunch. We then made our way to the start of the Cathedral Creek track. Once more we descended into the valley, past a magnificent Lillypilly (*Acmena Smithii*) standing straight and tall beside the track.

On reaching Cathedral Creek we followed the line of the gully past an amazing assortment of tree ferns. Some of these had quite straight trunks however most, having succumbed to the force of gravity to varying degrees on the steep hillside, have then twisted and turned their heads in search of sunlight resulting in gracefully curved trunks. Others have thickened the base of their trunks in the direction required to provide additional support. How do they know to do that?

Suddenly and all too soon, although no obvious evidence of any thoroughfare exists,

we see a car pass through the landscape in front of us - we are back at Mt Irvine Road. This was a wonderful area to walk in on such a hot day. Previous newsletters have told the story of the Happy Valley track becoming overgrown and lost, of Libby rediscovering it, Libby and Keith reopening it and more recently their son Peter installing the steps we used today. Having enjoyed a wonderful few hours exploring this cool, serene environment on this summer day we can only say thank you Libby, thank you Keith and thank you Peter!

Finally a short but important postscript. Walking group stalwart Mary Reynolds did not join us on this day so we were unable to deliver this message personally - Best Wishes for your Birthday Mary, trust you had a special day!

Having just read and absorbed John's account of the Happy Valley Cathedral Creek Walk, I am very regretful that I did not join it, for it must have been an enchanting time for all, although George may have mixed feelings about it.

Thank you for your birthday wishes. Ellis did everything within his power to make it very special for me. Thank you too for those lovely cards and good wishes I received.

## Our March Walk

**THE GRAND CANYON at  
BLACKHEATH**

**FRIDAY, 19<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2004**

Our Group has not undertaken this walk since 1999. This will be our sixth visit. As it was stated in 1999, it is not an easy walk involving a descent from Evans Lookout to the creeks below, a wonderful experience amidst the rainforest, the running creeks and the actual walk through a canyon and there is the climb back through Neate's Glen which is quite strenuous.

**Meet at the Neate's Glen Car Park in Evans Head Lookout Rd. BLACKHEATH at 9.30 a. m.**

**Or Meet at Merry Garth at 8.30 a.m.**

Bring morning tea, lunch & afternoon tea and plenty of water.

## FURTHER WALKS for 2004

Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2004 Fields Selection; up Farrer Road; down through Zircon Creek. Mt Wilson.

Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2004 The Engineers' Track off the Darling Causeway—we hope !

Friday, 18th June 2004 Govetts Leap to Evans Lookout.

Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2004 Centennial Glen Blackheath.

## BUSH CARE

This month we meet in Sloan Reserve, Mount Wilson on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2004 at 9.00a.m. to do some follow up work and weed around the plantings. Do join us for those 3 hours and enjoy the company as well as the rewards in seeing those weeds disappear.

Not sure about April as the 9<sup>th</sup> is Good Friday.

Check with Beth Raines on 4756 2121

## MEMBERS' NEWS

Some of the problems with illness seem to be diminishing. Helen Freeman's mother is home at last. A wonderful piece of news. We hope things have improved for the other members with family illness especially for Anne Clarke & Norma Quinn of Lithgow. We wish Helen Freeman and Barry a happy trip to Melbourne to visit their daughter.

## New Members:

It is a pleasure to be able to welcome a new member, Jane Beeby from 'Ashridge' Mt Wilson and to welcome in the near future 2 more new members Pauline White from

Wynnes Rocks Road and Gordon Bills from Hay Lane, Mt Wilson.

### FOR OUR MARCH WALK

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

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

**THE Grand Canyon Walking Track**  
**Blackheath. [NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service]**

