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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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EVANS LOOKOUT, THE  
NEATES GLEN AT

## Our March Walk

Friday 19th March 2004

The Grand Canyon Track which we were to walk today was officially opened with much pomp and ceremony by the then NSW Premier J.H. Carruthers on 16th February 1907. A party of around fifty people including John Neate (the builder of the Neates Glen Track) walked from Wall's Cave (upstream from the Neates Glen junction) through The Grand Canyon to The Fernery where the opening ceremony was held. The party then emerged at Evans Lookout to be greeted by a crowd of about two hundred.

A more modest group (well some of us are modest) of twelve walkers gathered at the Neates Glen Car Park in absolutely glorious weather to begin this circular walk. We were pleased to welcome Gordon Bills to the group and trust that this will be the first of many walks in which he will participate. Initially a stroll down Evans Lookout Road then a diversion into the Loop Car Park brings us to a track which meanders through heathland where flower spikes of the Hairpin Banksia (*Banksia spinulosa*) are just beginning to develop and Mountain Devils (*Lambertia*



Autumn in the Bush

## GRANDCANYON & BLACKHEATH

*formosa*) provide flashes of red among the grey/green foliage. We emerge at the Evans Lookout Car Park - we do eventually get away from car parks - and take the short diversion to Valley View Lookout.

The views from this lookout are stunning on a day such as this. Across Govett Gorge the cliff line below Fortress Ridge is an impressive sight and Lockley Pylon from this aspect

takes on a conical form. On the valley floor the waters of Govetts Creek glistened in the morning sun as they flow toward the Blue Gum Forest to meet the Grose River. Here begins a turbulent journey which leads through the Devils Wilderness to eventually enter the Nepean/Hawkesbury system at Yarramundi. The water we are viewing will then continue in a more leisurely fashion on its journey to the sea, another of Mother Nature's eternal cycles. From Evans Lookout a view of the majestic Carne Walls is obtained.

We now begin the descent toward Greaves Creek. Initially the forest is quite open where Silver Top Ash (*Eucalyptus siberi*) and Scribbly Gums (*Eucalyptus sclerophylla*) are the dominant trees and the understory contains Heath Banksia (*Banksia ericifolia*), Flaky-barked Tea-tree (*Leptospermum trinervium*) and the Dagger Hakea (*Hakea teretifolia*) with



their distinctive pointed fruit. Here and there the edge of the track is decorated with the convoluted form of the Curly Sedge or Old Mans Whiskers (*Caustis flexuosa*).

As we drop into a small gully we encounter a grove of Blue Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*) their smooth silky trunks towering toward the sunlight and at this time festooned with long ribbons of discarded bark. (These trees are all of similar size - more on this later). In places the dark green foliage of the Black Wattle (*Callicoma serratifolia*) forms a distinctive background to these silver trunks.

As we moved deeper into this glen we passed large rock overhangs, some supporting tall trees which had lost their footing and lurched across the gully to rest against the rock ledges. There was one example of a tree which had grown vertically under a high rock ledge and upon reaching the overhang simply grew in a semi-circular curve to bypass this obstacle and continued on its merry way.

A trickle of water is now evident in the creek and the rock faces are now supporting mosses and tiny ferns. The track dips more steeply and green whorls of the fronds of tree ferns can be seen below. Presently we are in an area known variously as Fern Dale, Fern Bower or The Fernery. This is an entrancing spot and contains what I believe to be one of the most beautiful cameo scenes in the Blue Mountains. Two ancient giants of the rainforest stand close together on opposite sides of the track. The lower sections of their soaring trunks are deeply fluted and flare markedly at their bases to enclose the rocky bank on which they grow. Exposed roots cascade sinuously down the face of the supporting embankment and disappear into the soil below. Skilfully placed rocks have been used to form a natural looking stairway leading between these moss encrusted columns. This stunning scene is framed by the soft green fronds of tree ferns - a magnificent example of the combined efforts of man and nature!

Suddenly we are at Greaves Creek and it is decided we will venture downstream to visit Beauchamp Falls. Light mist hangs in this valley and the sun penetrates the rainforest canopy in silver shards which randomly illuminate features on the creek banks. There are many tranquil pools in this area linked by gently running waters of the creek. Soon we cross the creek, move between some monolithic boulders and without warning we are in a very dry exposed area. Dramatic views of sheer cliff faces and impressive rock outcrops open up while close by there are intricate wind-worn honeycomb patterns in the rock beside the track.

It is always a source of wonder how a gentle stream with an apparently small volume of water flowing can turn on such a spectacular display when it feeds a waterfall. The white water crashing over the dark rock at Beauchamp Falls is quite striking. We rested here awhile soaking up the sights and sounds, some members exploring the pool at the base of the falls. Here Mother Nature once again demonstrates she is streets ahead of us mere mortals - "Drive Thru" fast food outlets a new idea? Not likely! A young water monitor was lolling in the sun on a low branch and the fast food (though obviously not fast enough) in the form of a constant stream of black ants was coming to him, a very convenient arrangement - at least for the lizard!

On the return journey upstream along Greaves Creek another of those gems of nature was noted. A moss draped log bridging the creek carried a deposit of red gum which had extruded from a tree above. Glinting in the filtered sunlight it appeared as a large ruby nestled on a bed of lush green velvet. Soon we pass the junction of the track from Evans Lookout and continue into the lower section of The Grand Canyon. Here the canyon is relatively wide and the track meanders back and forth across the creek. Sassafras (*Doryphora sassafras*) and Coachwood (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*) form an open canopy while numerous tiny cascades drop from the rock ledges high above.



The course of the creek varies widely. There are wide shallow pools, clear streams rippling across pebble beds, tiny falls dropping into deep ponds. In places the water disappears completely to take a subterranean diversion and in one spot to emerge via a waterfall deep within a cave. The cliff faces and valley floor in this area are draped with mosses and lichens. Ferns ranging from the minute Common Filmy-fern (*Hymenophyllum cupressiforme*) which completely cover rock faces and drip icy cold water up to the huge King Ferns (*Todea barbara*) appear in abundance.

Presently we reach a point where the track rises to the left. Here we follow the course of the creek through an enchanting cool green world. The walls of the valley become steeper and begin to encroach closer and closer. We sidle around the edge of a rock pool and emerge into an incredible amphitheatre encircled with vertical walls and having a pebble bed floor. At the upstream end of this area the canyon walls almost touch. The constantly intersecting curves and channels in these rock walls, the result of millions of years of erosion, provide amazing patterns which are enhanced even more by the effects of light and shade as sunlight streams into this deep narrow gorge. Quite some time is spent here as we are reluctant to leave the atmosphere of this special place.

Back at the point where the track begins its climb away from the creek we settle down for lunch. What better place to dine, cool and shady, beautiful trees and moss covered rocks, the sounds of birds, water and.....other people!! We are spoilt on most of our walks by having the area to ourselves and this intrusion by others elicited much mock displeasure from Rosemary!

As well as the visual beauty on this walk our aural senses were treated to a continuous aquatic symphony courtesy of the innumerable instances of moving water. The gentle repetitive plop as drops of water exude from

damp moss banks and fall into tiny water filled depressions, the gurgling sound of water trickling down minuscule rills, the roar of Beauchamp Falls and the subdued rumble echoing from an unseen waterfall secreted within a dark cave. The staccato drips as globules plummet from high rock ledges into still pools, the burbling of diminutive rivulets tumbling down rocky embankments - the variations were endless and provided a very pleasant accompaniment throughout the day.

A short climb and we are on the section of track which skirts the rim of the canyon. The track here lies below large rock overhangs and affords occasional glimpses deep into the dimly lit chasms below. At one point a pair of Lyrebirds were sighted on the opposite bank scratching through the leaf litter, quite unperturbed by our presence. Shortly the track passes behind a small waterfall and then threads its way through a tunnel and we presently arrive at the beach with its large cave once known as the "Rotunda". After resting here awhile we ascend to the more open area which leads to the start of the Neates Glen section. The effects of the bushfires of last year are very evident here. Many species are busily regenerating from charred remnants - the Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea resinifera*) are spectacular, fresh green foliage and tall thick scapes carrying large flower spikes. There are many examples of the Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*) re-establishing watched over by the beady eyes of singed but intact mountain devils.

A climb through the chill damp beauty of Neates Glen is followed by a zig zag up the hillside of open woodland to our starting point at the car park. We have come full circle and in so doing have had the opportunity to view yet another of nature's cycles. The huge Blue Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*) below Neates Glen which have succumbed to the last bushfires, (some skeletal forms still standing, others having crashed into the gully) will regenerate from seed and form stands of trees of similar size and age as we saw at the Evans



Lookout end of this walk. Among these now forlorn oreades were numerous Silver Top Ash (*Eucalyptus siberi*) which, in contrast to the oreades, have fire resistant coarse bark and are reshooting luxuriantly from their dormant buds. So in quite different modes, nature's cycles continue. We look forward to observing more of these unique phenomena on future walks.

**This account of the Grand Canyon and the surrounding beautiful environment by our gifted reporter John Cardy will surely persuade those who have not been on this particular walk to undertake it in the very near future. It is a special place. Remember it is the only canyon in the Blue Mountains accessible in this way.**

## Our April Walk

**FIELDS SELECTION- TO ZIRCON CREEK; TO FARRER ROAD VIA THE RUNNERS' TRACK-DOWN TO ZIRCON CREEK—MT WILSON.**

**FRIDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2004**

The Autumn period is always a very demanding one for those who open gardens in Mt Wilson. To assist Libby in this very busy period this walk is close to home but will provide a great variety of environments as only Mt Wilson can produce.

**Meet at Zircon Creek off the Mt Irvine Road at 9.00a.m. Having passed through Mt Wilson, drive along the Mt Irvine Road for about 4 km passing Farrer Road West on the left. The track we take is on the right.**

Bring morning tea, lunch & afternoon tea.

## FURTHER WALKS for 2004

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

Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2004 Govetts Leap to Evans Lookout.

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

Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2004 To the Cox's River; the second section of the 6 Foot track.

Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2004 Leura Cascades to Gordon Falls; to the Pool of Salome & Lyre Bird Dell.

### BUSH CARE

As Friday 9<sup>th</sup> April is Good Friday Bush Care is cancelled for this month.

However in May we will be back to it with continued enthusiasm attacking that section of bushland opposite Rimmon Cottage in Waterfall Road on Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2004 at 9.00a.m. for 3 hours.

Then again on Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2004 at the same place and at the same time.

For further information Contact Beth Raines 4756 2121

### MEMBERS' NEWS

We received with much regret the resignations of Elizabeth and John Mason who moved to Leura 2 years ago. Elizabeth and John have been wonderfully loyal members since they first came to Mt Wilson over 12 years ago. We thank them for their constant support and wish them good health, contentment and peace in their future life.

Helen and John Cardy are off to an exciting trip to New Zealand on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2004. With all their skills they should have a truly great adventure.

### FOR OUR APRIL WALK

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

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