
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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September 2004

SIX FOOT TRACK CEMETERY TO THE

Our August Walk

The Second Section of the Six
Foot Track
From The Megalong Cemetery
to The Cocks River

Friday 20th August 2004

The Six Foot Track was initially marked by a government survey party via a series of blazed trees in 1884. A grant of two thousand five hundred pounds from the NSW Government funded the construction of a bridle track (six foot wide - thus the name) which allowed riders to travel two abreast from Katoomba to Jenolan Caves. One hundred years after its construction the track, having fallen into disuse after the 1930's was re-marked, sign posted and re-opened to walkers in 1985.

Seventeen walkers gathered on this stunningly beautiful morning to tackle the second section which runs from the Megalong Valley Road to the Cocks River. We welcomed some new faces today:- Susan Smart who is keeping Westring warm and cosy while Florence and Arthur are overseas. Kathleen Howard-Smith had joined Roger who has participated in our last few walks. Sue Davies a friend of Peter



Spring in the Bush

MEGALONG COX'S RIVER

Raines who is visiting from Western Australia and we welcomed back Alan Bonfield, a friend of Gordon Bills. Alan had joined us on the Blue Gum Forest walk and he came back - we must be doing something right!

This walk commences adjacent to the Megalong Cemetery and I will refrain from making any silly puns regarding the Six Foot Track and being six feet under. Initially we follow the

access road then meander through open farmland. A rather steep haul up a hillside is rewarded with a view back to the shadowy cliffs below Megalong Head and the Narrow Neck Plateau. This view adds credence to the theory that Megalong is an Aboriginal name meaning "valley under the rock".

We descend toward a creek line and a few protrusions of granite are noted. Here Kangaroo Grass (*The meda australis*) is becoming evident and appropriately a little further on some Eastern Grey Kangaroos are sighted.

The open grazing lands now give way to a more wooded environment. Large granite boulders define the course of a dry creek. The terrain now becomes more rugged and the track swings back toward the line of Megalong Creek. Presently glimpses of the Cocks River

still 150 metres below track level are seen. Here the pervasive olive green/grey of the Eucalypt forest is highlighted occasionally with the lighter green foliage of native conifers, possibly Port Jackson Cypress (*Callitris rhomboidea*).

In this area huge granite boulders dot the hillside. Some are smoothly rounded and carry blotches of vivid orange lichen. Others are neatly split as though rent apart by some mythical cleaver wielding titan. Due to weathering a number of these monumental rocks have shed "onion skins", thin layers which have peeled off the curved surfaces. The branches of Blackthorns (*Bursaria spinosa*) in this area are decorated with tufted beards of grey lichen. A small eye-catching shrub which was plentiful here carried tiny attractive white flowers, its yellow/green leaves emanating directly from stems rather than via stalks, possibly the Olax (*Olax stricta*). A foil to the delicacy of this shrub was provided by the nearby Spiny-headed Mat Rush (*Lomandra longifolia*) with their spiky bracts and strappy leaves.

At a point on the track which afforded magnificent views across the valley to Gibraltar Sugarloaf, Mary decided her little legs had had enough for their first walk in some time. Saying she had come prepared for this eventuality she made herself comfortable among all this splendour to await our return. She probably wrote several historical articles and half a book on some aspect of Mt Wilson during our absence. (Walking only part way is an option for members to keep in mind when a walk returns via the same path provided they are prepared to stay put until the group reappears).

Perhaps Mary's decision was a wise one as just around the corner the track descended steeply to a dry creek. Here we pass between gigantic granite tors. Nestled along the sheltered base of one of these monoliths was a bed of Maiden Hair Fern (*Adiantum aethiopicum*) to my mind one of the most graceful plants in the bush. References preface

the popular name of this *Adiantum* with "Common" - I see nothing common at all about this maiden.

As we descend toward the river a few Kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneus*) are noted, their thin shiny leaves shimmering in the sunlight. On reaching the river bank we are treated to a most magnificent display of ancient River Oaks (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*). Some of these arise from the sandy flats beside the river while others seem just as comfortable clinging tenaciously to granite islands mid-stream. Their flared bases and fluted tapering trunks give these stately trees a majestic appearance.

Soon we were at Bowtell's Swing Bridge. This bridge was named in memory of Corporal Robert Bowtell who was killed in Vietnam in 1966. The bridge was constructed by members of his unit in 1992. Only one person at a time is permitted to cross this bridge as it is a suspension type and can sway considerably. Watching some of our group cross indicated there was quite a lot of suspense in them as well.

Awaiting our turn to cross the bridge gave the chance to admire the amazing pattern of swirl pools worn into the exposed granite of the river bed. There are individual perfectly circular pools cut deep into the stone. Also intricate patterns have been formed by pools cutting into each other. The resulting intersecting curves forming sinuous lines along the bedrock.

Having all successfully negotiated the bridge we proceeded downstream to the picnic area for lunch. Along the way we crossed the most delightful little glen. Here the gully was strewn with small pink and grey granite rocks carrying copious deposits of rich green velvety moss under the shade of a thick cover of Grey Myrtle (*Backhousia myrtifolia*) - a heavenly spot. Perhaps fittingly in a more exposed position nearby was a large tangled clump of Devils Twine (*Cassytha pubescens*). This parasitic climber had completely enveloped its

host plant taking nourishment via its many suckers.

We settled down for lunch in most picturesque surroundings. The River Oaks provided shade for those who sought it while some chose the sun drenched granite shelves. The musical accompaniment was the soft gurgle of the river and the occasional croaking of frogs, a sound heard too infrequently in the bush of late. In the still ponds water boatmen skimmed across the surface in a seemingly aimless ballet. Libby then performed pirouettes worthy of a ballerina as she boulder-hopped to ensure everyone present received a piece of her delicious bushwalkers cake.

Following some exploration of the immediate area we re-crossed the river, this time at ground level to the great relief of some members. We then headed upstream to begin our return journey.

The hillside before us, aglow in the afternoon sun, presented a scene such that you felt you were walking through a Tom Roberts painting. It would not have surprised if the Cobb & Co coach suddenly appeared closely followed by the bushrangers. Actually, the dogged determination of George Knott in endeavouring to extract a two dollar coin found by one of the group, indicated perhaps we already had a bushranger in our midst.

The return journey retraced our outward path. Same track but very different scenery. The afternoon light applied a totally different character to the surroundings. Hillsides which were bathed in soft morning light were now hiding in shadows. Ridge lines to the west were more distinct and trees which extended above the ridge were dramatically silhouetted against the brighter sky. Shady gullies of the morning now had hidden features illuminated. The earlier shaded cliffs below Narrow Neck Plateau now ablaze with gold and orange hues.

It is always intriguing to me that when you are in an area containing craggy rock faces or large boulders someone will see

representations of other objects in the rocks. Today, among all this granite, someone (who shall remain anonymous to protect George from further embarrassment) pointed out a giant toilet bowl, a giant lounge chair and a giant high top loaf of bread. Perhaps with a giant stretch of the imagination I could go along with the loaf of bread!

During this walk we have covered approximately 12 kilometres and descended (and of course then ascended!) 300 metres from our starting point with a few ups and downs in between. It is perhaps then not surprising that we arrive back at the cars straggling in like Brown's cows. However that is probably appropriate in this bucolic scene. A great walk in yet another very different area of these wonderful Blue Mountains.

Following the usual cup of tea and the total demolition of Rosemary's chocolate slice we reluctantly headed toward home. As we wended our way out of this sublime vale we were treated to the setting sun intensifying the reds and golds of the towering sandstone cliffs.

Megalong "valley under the rock" indeed!

There is little doubt that John Cardy's account of these walks is quite superb and you surely must feel that you are walking with the Group as you read. { Mary }.

Our September Walk

Friday 17th September 2004

Leura Cascades to Gordon Falls; The Pool of Salome & Lyre Bird Dell.

No doubt this is a familiar walk for many but it is still a great pleasure to tread well known tracks. This is also an easier walk which follows the Prince Henry Cliff Walk from

which are seen wonderful views of the extensive Jamison Valley. From Gordon Falls there is a delightful diversion to Lyrebird Dell and the Pool of Salome including an overhanging Rock shelter occupied by indigenous people over 8,000 years ago. The last time this walk was undertaken was in 2000 when we celebrated our 10th Anniversary.

MEET IN THE LEURA FALLS CAR PARK OFF CLIFF DRIVE at 9.30 a.m. Or at MERRY GARTH at 8.30 a.m.

Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.

FURTHER WALKS

Friday 15th October 2004 Mt Irvine Danes Way, the Ramparts and & Mt Irvine Road

Friday 19th November 2004 To Lockyer's Pylon off the Mt Hay Road

Friday 10th December 2004 to Rigby Hill off the Bells Line of Road at the Pierces' Pass entrance. [Note this is the second Friday]

BUSH CARE

We will meet on Friday 10th September 2004 in the Sloan Reserve Mt Wilson at 9.00 a.m.

In October on Friday 8th October 2004 again in Sloan Reserve Mt Wilson at 9.00a.m.

On Friday 12th November 2004 meet opposite Rimon in Waterfall Road Mt Wilson at 9.00a.m.

On Friday 10th December 2004 meet again at Rimon in Waterfall Road Mt Wilson at 9.00 a.m.

For further information contact Beth Raines at 4756 2121.

MEMBERS NEWS

We received a very nice thank you note from Bruce & Sue Gailey for the flowers we sent to Bruce while he recovered from a hip operation recently. Bruce now has to face a knee replacement operation. Some members are having interesting trips. We hope to bring you more details later.

FOR OUR SEPTEMBER WALK on 17th September 2004

Contact Libby Raines on 47 56 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.