
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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February 2003

HAPPY VALLEY &
MT WILSON

Our January Walk

FRIDAY 17TH JANUARY 2003

Due to the unusually hot weather and the fact that the scheduled walk was exposed mainly to a western aspect, Libby wisely decided a more comfortable walk on such a day would be the Happy Valley track. In any case walking the Sunday afternoon track on a Friday 'arvo' seemed somehow inappropriate.

Fourteen gathered at Cathedral Reserve for this our first walk for 2003 giving the opportunity to walk off some of the excess of the festive season. It was a delight to welcome Gloria Harris back into the fold after her knee problems and to welcome Mary's granddaughter, Phoebe who was holidaying with Mary and Ellis.

We initially went via the Giant Tree as some in the group had not previously seen this venerable colossus of the forest. A huge brown Barrel [*Eucalyptus fastigata*], probably between two and three hundred years old, its crown illuminated by sunlight far above the canopy of this pocket of rainforest. On the shaded forest floor some in the party linked hands around the majestically buttressed trunk and it was declared an eight person tree. On a previous visit, in December 1998, it took nine people to encircle the trunk. Obviously they were shorter people or were not stretching enough!

A meander back down the hill and along Mt Irvine Road delivered us to the Happy Valley track. Here Libby's sharp and experienced eye spotted a " cicada stick", a branchlet embellished with a myriad of tiny frills formed when the cicada makes minute slits into which eggs are deposited. When the dead branch falls to



Summer in the Bush

CATHEDRAL CREEK TOPIC

the ground the cicada larvae burrow into the soil where they spend up to seven years before emerging. Is it any wonder they sing so much upon seeing daylight!

Shortly after leaving the roadside the Eucalypts give way to rainforest species and the canopy becomes more dense. Here we paused while Libby gave a short history of this track and explained her sentimental attachment to the Happy Valley. It was first established many years ago by Peter and Tom Kirk but became overgrown due to lack of use, remaining hidden for some time. The section down to the Cathedral Creek branch was used more frequently and remained open..

It became a mission in Libby's life to rediscover the Happy Valley track. She eventually found the zig zag section and worked her way back up the hill. This was around the time she met Keith and together they cleared the route to reopen the path to this wonderful place. In more recent years Libby and Keith's son, Peter installed the steps and retaining structures which exist today.

While this discourse was in progress a creaking and groaning noise was heard by some of the group followed by the sound of a large branch crashing to earth back toward the road. It was a very still day so this was a perfect example of the derivation of the term " widow maker".

Continuing along the track, we encounter trees with buttressed trunks of all shapes encased in mosses and lichens. A verdant atmosphere evolves as we move deeper into the rainforest. Although there is a noticeable dryness relative to our last visit, the green hue of the enclosed space has a cooling, calming effect. There are examples of the Rough Tree Fern [*Cyathea australis*] here, their slender trunks holding filigree umbrellas high in the air. Here and there beside the track the False Sarsaparilla [*Hardenbergia violacea*] is seen twining and creeping along the forest floor.

Soon the descent in to the valley begins in earnest as the track commences to zig zag. Huge moss covered rock faces loom beside the track, walls of green carrying a delicate tracery of surface roots from various plants which have germinated in tiny crevices and are now desperately seeking nourishment and moisture. Below a rock overhang the ground is carpeted with the glossy dark green fronds of the Strap Fern [*Blechnum patersonii*] as we descend deeper into the gully the Rock Felt- Fern [*Pyrrosia rupestris*] is noted clinging to trees and scrambling over rock faces. Here also are quaint little clumps of perhaps one of the Club Mosses, looking like microscopic forests of conifers.

The pleasant sound of running water is now heard and presently there is a dramatic and welcome drop in temperature. The surroundings are now more lush and the ground more moist. Numerous very large soft tree ferns [*Dicksonia Antarctica*] are present here. One example adjacent to a tiny creek proffered an interesting sight in that its spent fronds were still attached to the trunk but hung down forming a thick conical "skirt" which completely hid the trunk.

We were now at Waterfall Creek in Happy Valley. A magical place; lush greenery everywhere you look, clear water running across a series of pebble beds before dropping over a rock shelf into a larger pool. Some members sidled along a narrow rock ledge and clambered down to this pond to obtain a full view of the enchanting little waterfall. Afternoon tea was enjoyed in these pleasant surroundings among the many King Ferns [*Todea barbara*] by the group while watching water boatmen navigating the tiny pools and a yabby which put in a brief appearance before taking shelter under a rock. Perhaps it was the intoxicating effect of this area, one of many places carrying the name Happy Valley, or maybe my thought processes are seriously flawed, even twisted, but as I sat there I couldn't help wondering does there exist perchance a Sad Valley, a Despondent Valley ? Maybe I should stop reading Leunig cartoons!

While most of the group began the climb back up the valley, some members explored a short distance upstream. Here is a captivating scene. Picture if you will a narrow canyon whose walls have been sculpted in to an intricate pattern of intersecting arcs and curves. Below these walls which appear to almost touch in places a tranquil elongated pool mirrors the surroundings. In the foreground lighter greens of ferns and moss covered tree trunks contrast with the deeper, richer greens encasing the rocky creek banks in the more subdued light below the canyon walls. The canyon forms a tunnel like effect through which, at the far end of the pool, a silver cascade tumbles over velvet terraces of moss covered rocks, all intensely illuminated by a shaft of sunlight spearing through a gap in the rainforest canopy. Give me Happy Valleys any day !

On reaching the junction of the Cathedral Creek track the group divided once more, some opting to return via

the road and others to explore Cathedral Creek. Beside this track is an enormous Lillypilly [*Acmena smithii*], its almost cylindrical straight trunk like some monumental column thrusting skywards. At the Cathedral Creek another intriguing example of a Soft Tree Fern which has fallen but is supported in a horizontal position by the fork of a tree. The head has then turned seeking the light and formed a perfect sharp edged right angle.

We followed the line of the creek, carefully picking our way around glorious moss beds and past numerous tree ferns. Soon we encountered one of those sometimes macabre displays of beauty presented by nature – a dark rock shelf was decorated with the brilliantly coloured feathers of a King Parrot which had become part of the food chain. Further on nature had adorned the ground with the red sepals of the Coachwood [*Ceratopetalum apetalum*].

Soon we came upon an outcrop of basalt in the creek bed and shortly after we were adjacent to the Mt Irvine Road where a forest giant lay, having fallen some months ago. When this dry period ends the presently bare trunk will soon be covered in moss, fungi and insects will begin their relentless work. Eventually this giant will be returned to the soil from whence it came.

Continuing along the dry watercourse beside the road we discovered the nest of a Yellow Breasted Scrub Wren, like a huge cocoon suspended vertically on the end of a thin branch overhanging the watercourse. As we reached the edge of the rainforest we were treated to a grand finale of the delicate beauty of the Victorian Christmas Bush [*Prostanthera lasiantha*] with its cluster of exquisite purple/mauve throated white flowers.

Soon after we emerged at Cathedral Reserve from whence we had come a few hours earlier. Thus ended a walk through some of the most beautiful country one could wish to experience.

The above detailed and descriptive account was written by John Cardy.

With many areas of National Parks closed due to the ever present danger of bushfires in this hot and drought stricken summer, it is not possible to draw up a program of walks for 2003. Thus we will be planning each walk on a month to month basis until the situation improves. We certainly hope it does very soon. We express our collective sympathy to all those many people already devastated by bushfire destruction and sadness for the loss of life on property and in the bushland and for the loss of the bushland itself. No words can adequately

describe the impact it is having where fire has struck.

Our February Walk

FRIDAY, 21ST FEBRUARY 2003

A walk from the Leura Cascades Picnic Area along the Prince Henry Cliff Walk to Echo Point to view the changes made there; then down the Giant Stairway to the shady and cool Federal Pass and onto the Furber Steps or the Scenic Railway exploring the new board walks created in that area.

Note that we will have an early lunch before Echo Point to avoid the pressure of people there. Also bring some cash with you if you wish to return to the top via the Scenic Railway or the Skyway. We think it is now **\$8.00**

MEET AT KATOOMBA FALLS PICNIC AREA AT 9 .30 A.M. or AT MERRY GARTH AT 8 .30 A.M.

AT Katoomba Falls Picnic Area we will leave one or two cars and then all proceed to the Leura Cascade Picnic Area to commence our walk

Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.

It maybe possible to visit the GlowWorm Tunnel in March but as yet it is far from definite as the Newnes Area is closed.

Also note that in April as the third Friday will be Good Friday 18th April 2003, we are proposing to hold that walk on Monday. 14th April 2003. Let us know what you think about that change.

BUSH CARE

The new notice about dates and venues has been delivered. Again we hope that you will join us this year. Already there is a sense of satisfaction as those involved see the positive results of all their hard work. Remember we meet at 9.00a.m. for 3 hours on the second Friday of each month.

Below are the dates and venues up to June 2003.

Friday 14th February 2003: Meet in Sloan Reserve, Mt Wilson.

Friday 14th March 2003: Meet outside Jalscene, Galwey Lane Mount Wilson.

Friday 11th April 2003 : Meet in Silva Plana , Mt Wilson

Friday 9th May 2003 : Meet in Silva Plana Mt Wilson.

Friday 13th June : Meet in Sloan Reserve Mt Wilson

For further information contact Liz Raines on 4756 2121.

FOR OUR FEBRUARY WALK

CONTACT

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We express our appreciation to **C&W Printing Mort Street Lithgow** for their assistance with the printing of this newsletter.