

---

---

# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

---

---

Volume 14 Issue 7

July 2004

---

---

## FROM GOVETTS LEAP

### Our June Walk

FROM GOVETTS LEAP TO  
WHERE? WHEREVER THE  
WIND MAY TAKE US!

Friday, 18th June 2004

At the time of this walk Libby and Keith were somewhere in Switzerland, possibly merrily yodelling high on a mountain. Mary on the other hand would have had no hope of yodelling even if she felt so inclined as she was suffering the effects of the flu and was unable to attend.

Now, as you know, when the leaders are away the group goes astray!

We gathered at the car park with the intention of walking the Cliff Top Track from Govetts Leap Lookout to Evans Lookout. Well we did make it to Govetts Leap Lookout. It was one of those beautifully clear mornings when from a vantage point such as this you could see forever. Unfortunately the reason it was so clear was because a veritable gale was blowing! Wind is defined as air in natural motion - there was indeed plenty of motion in the air this morning!

The strength of the wind was graphically indicated when Grace Weaver, who graciously came to let us know she and Owen would not



Winter in the Bush

## TO WHERE ?

be walking today, was almost blown off her feet when she emerged from her car.

So, that left eight (fool?) hardy souls surveying the scene along the cliff edge. The section from the lookout down to Govetts Leap Brook appeared to be fairly protected. However in the area where the track climbs up from the other side of the brook the mallee ash were whipping around quite violently. We decided under the prevailing conditions this walk would not only be quite

unpleasant and very uncomfortable but could potentially be dangerous as the track in places does pass quite close to the cliff edge. No one present was particularly interested in the possibility of doing a "Mary Poppins" into the Govett Gorge so a more sheltered alternative was sought. There was some suggestion there was a lovely sheltered little corner in a coffee shop back at the town centre!

The obvious choice however was to explore the Fairfax Heritage Track and then re-assess the wind conditions. This track, which meanders through the open forest between the lookout and the Blue Mountains Heritage Centre near the park entrance, was completed in 1987. It was built in such a way as to provide assisted wheelchair access, a wonderful concept. The track did have a consolidated surface to facilitate wheelchair



use however this has to a large extent now crumbled, one can only hope refurbishment is planned in the not too distant future.

Upon leaving the Govetts Leap Lookout we are in an area sheltered from the strong wind and soon we are at the George Phillips Lookout. Here we get the chance to enjoy the magnificent views into Govetts Gorge and the Grose Valley under much more comfortable conditions. The slope immediately below us is dotted with the brilliant golden blossom of the Sunshine Wattle (*Acacia terminalis*). As we proceed along the track Heath and Hairpin Banksia (*Banksia ericifolia* and *spinulosa*) are evident, both carrying stunning flower spikes. The orange spikes of the Heath variety more prolific at this time than the yellow Hairpin flowers.

The trees in this area are mainly Scribbly Gum (*Eucalyptus schlerophylla*) and the Peppermint Gum (*Eucalyptus piperita*). The larvae of the *Ogmograptis scribula* moth had been busy decorating the bark of the former with intricate patterns while the smooth white branches and upper trunks of the latter put on a spectacular ballet as they responded to the forces of the wind while brilliantly spotlighted by the morning sun. The Peppermint Gum is an interesting tree historically. It was from this tree that eucalyptus oil was first extracted by the surgeon of the First Fleet. Also it was this species of tree which was marked by Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson on the purported first crossing of the Blue Mountains by Europeans in 1813 and whose stump now sits imprisoned beside the highway and is known as the "Explorer's Tree".

As we zig zag up the hill the effects of the bushfires of about 18 months ago are still evident, regeneration being slowed by the lack of any good rains since. Now however the landscape contains scattered splashes of colour from the bright red and orange tips on the re-establishing vegetation. The scene was further enhanced by the brilliant blue flowers of *Lobelia dentata*, an annual herb which is more profuse after fire and the lemon buttons of the

pale Everlasting Paper Daisy (*Helichrysum rutidolepis*). Also present here are Broad-leaf Geebungs (*Persoonia levis*) and Waratahs (*Telopea speciosissima*) making a vigorous comeback from the ashes.

Upon completing the Fairfax Track circuit we sought refuge in one of the quaint stone shelter sheds for refreshments much to the relief of Helen Freeman who had been threatening open rebellion if morning tea didn't arrive shortly! The wind had subsided to about a force 8 gale by this time so it was decided we would walk down to the Govetts Leap Brook crossing and if the conditions there were favourable we would walk the Braeside Track.

We were sheltered from the worst of the wind for most of the descent and passed several examples of *Leptospermum* thickly furnished with vivid white blossom. At the Govetts Leap Brook crossing the numerous Banksia present attracted a number of New Holland Honeyeaters. In this area and along the first section of the Braeside Track there were a few Red Five-corners (*Styphelia tubiflora*) their gently curved tubular flowers adding a dash of brightness to the winter greenery.

Just prior to taking the leap off the cliff edge the waters of this little brook spread shallow and wide across flat rock platforms however they quickly narrow as we move upstream. Presently the banks of this little burn are clothed with Pouched Coral-fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*) initially confined close to the watercourse then great swathes of this fern extend for many metres on each side. In some places the brook tunnels its way secretively under this carpet of green to emerge glinting as it tumbles over tiny cascades. Among the many and varied flora here are the *Grevillea acanthifolia* sometimes referred to as the Swamp Grevillea, the Sydney Golden Wattle (*Acacia longifolia*) and the ubiquitous Mountain Devil (*Lambertia formosa*) one example displaying four devilish little heads clustered tightly together.



Soon we reach the brick dam wall which was built in 1906. This dam supplemented the water supply for the steam trains which until then relied on water from a dam on the site of the Blackheath swimming pool. It is reported that up to 230,000 litres of water a day was drawn from this dam up until 1929. Seventy five years of siltation has resulted in the complete filling of the pondage so that the water is now only a few centimetres deep behind the wall.

Here the track crosses the brook and beside the stairs which lead up to the gravel road are groups of what appear to be miniature conifers but are actually examples of club moss. We stopped for lunch along this road at a point overlooking the valley which accommodates the upper reaches of Govetts Leap Brook. We were sitting in a sheltered spot which was initially bathed in warming rays of sunshine however on a day such as this it was inevitable that was not going to last. White clouds raced across the sky as a precursor for the more menacing dark clouds which were building to the south west and soon we were treated to some light sleet which prompted a hasty end to lunch.

We made our way to Cross and Cleopatra Streets by which time the sun had reappeared and we concluded the day with a very pleasant stroll down Govetts Leap Road to the car park. Considering the rather wild conditions which prevailed when we first gathered for this walk, so extreme in fact that yours truly decided to don some tracksuit pants over the more usual shorts, it turned out to be a very pleasant day. Although we did not stick to the original plans, you will be pleased to hear Libby and Mary, that the group did not go too far astray!

On the way home we city dwellers were treated to an indication of just how strong the winds had been. Council and SES workers were gathered near a very tall pine tree adjacent to the Hydro Majestic which was leaning precariously against another tree. It was only this second tree which prevented the

first from falling across the highway and causing who knows what havoc!

**Congratulations to those 8 brave souls who undertook this walk. I am very pleased that I did not join you as I fear the consequences would have been disastrous for all. Thank you again to John for leading so well and providing so vivid an account. [ Mary]**

## Our July Walks

Yes ,we have two walks listed for July.

**Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2004**

### **To Centennial Glen Blackheath**

This will be the fourth time our Group has undertaken this walk. While the track can be rough at times, Centennial Glen is a small canyon and provides all sorts of delights as a result. We will see Fort Rock from which there are wonderful views of the Kanimbla Valley.

We will meet where we met in 1999 when we last did this walk

**MEET IN THE CAR PARK A SHORT DISTANCE DOWN CENTENNIAL GLEN ROAD. AT 9.30 A.M.**

**To reach this road cross the railway line at Blackheath, turn left immediately into Shipley Rd and follow Shipley Rd almost to its junction with the Megalong Valley Rd. Centennial Glen Rd goes off to the right just before that junction. Or**

**MEET AT 9.00A.M. AT MERRY GARTH**

Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea

## **Our Second July Walk**

**Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> July 2004**

**This walk is for our fit walkers. From Perry's Lookdown Blackheath into the Grose Valley through the Blue Gum Forest and out of the Grose Valley via Pierce's Pass. It is a long walk and there are steep grades, particularly big steps coming up Pierce's Pass. Practise knee bending and/or**



going up and down stairs to strengthen your knees. You will be delighted with what you see and it is well worth the effort.

**MEET at MERRY GARTH at 8.00A.M. or at PIERCE'S PASS off the Bells Line of Road a few Km. east of the turn off to Mt Wilson. at 8.15. A. M.**

**If at the BLACKHEATH end MEET outside ST AIDAN'S CHURCH Hat Hill Road at 9.00 A. M.**

Libby asks that you think carefully where you want to leave your car as the walk will be finishing at Pierce's Pass. There will be transport returning to Blackheath.

As Libby will need at least two people to help with the long car shuffle she is asking for Volunteers. This involves taking people back to Blackheath at the end of the walk to pick up the cars.

Could you please let Libby know if you are going on this walk before Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2004 and whether you can help with the long car shuffle ? Tel: 4756 2121

Bring the usual refreshments but bring extra food and drink [water] as we will stop for a drink at the bottom of Pierce's Pass

## FURTHER WALKS

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

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

Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2004 Mt Irvine Danes Way, the Ramparts & Mt Irvine Road.

Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2004 To Lockyer's Pylon off the Mt Hay Road.

## BUSH CARE

One only has to look at Silva Plana and Sloan Reserve in Mt Wilson to observe what consistent, quiet effort can produce by a small but dedicated group of people who have loyally and generously given their time on the second Friday of each month led so efficiently

by Beth and Libby Raines and with the constant support & guidance of Chris Dewhurst from the Blue Mts. City Council.

A special thank you to Beth & Libby & Chris.

The next Bush Care Day will be Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2004 at 9.00a.m. to Noon at Waterfall Road Mt Wilson

Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> August 2004 at Galwey Lane Mt Wilson 9.00a.m. to Noon.

For further information Contact Beth Raines on 4756 2121.

## MEMBERS NEWS

Many of us have received wonderful postcards showing the glorious countryside in that small country from Libby and Keith in Switzerland. They are making the most of their walking month away. They return about 12<sup>th</sup> July 2004.

Bruce Gailey is in St Vincents Hospital having a new hip put in place. Bruce and Sue were among our founding members and have been totally committed ever since. We send them both our deep affection and hopes for a more mobile future.

Alison Heap who was our Treasurer for quite some years until 2003 sadly has lost her father at Kurrajong. We extend to Alison, her mother and all her family our warmest sympathy and friendship.

## Another Story for Nature Lovers.

Here is another tale of nature from Libby as we promised last month.

" On this day I was walking with my sister, Cecily in the Megalong Valley scouting out a future bush walk for our group. We were following a rough sandy fire trail when just at our feet was something long, thin and moving. Thinking it was a young snake, I grabbed Cecily's arm to prevent her treading on it but when we examined it more closely it was a line of 22 furry brown caterpillars, following each other head to tail, almost touching each other. They left a line in the sand and when we looked along the track we could see they had been making their way almost zig-zagging across the track for some distance. We



watched fascinated as they continued slowly along. Then they reached a stick on the path which they could have passed under but over the stick they went, one by one without breaking their ordered line. They left us with many unanswered questions. Where were they going? Why did they travel in that manner? How far were they traveling? We have so much to learn about nature!"

**Have any of our members have answers to these questions?**

**Another Story from Nature.**

"Peter Raines was working high in a dead gum tree recently when he felt he was getting wet and it was not raining! Looking up he saw two possums who had come out of a hole to investigate the noise of the chain saw. Perhaps they were relieving themselves of nervous tension. They climbed further up the tree and then to Peter's horror one jumped off the branch! Peter envisaged the little creature having a very hard landing and injuring itself as it was a long way down to the ground. After free falling for some distance the possum extended its little legs out wide and flattened out its body and to Peter's surprise glided down and landed on another tree near by. Peter was much relieved."

Libby had this note attached to her stories which I should have printed last month. My apologies for missing it

**"I take this opportunity to thank you all for your good wishes for our travels. We will think of you as we walk in the mountains in Switzerland. Enjoy your June walk and we look forward to seeing you in July."**

**Libby & Keith.**

**As I could be away from 26<sup>th</sup> July 2004 until about 14<sup>th</sup> August it may not be possible to produce the August newsletter before 26<sup>th</sup> July. To deal with that likely event below are the arrangements for the AUGUST WALK.**

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> August 2004**

**TO THE COX'S RIVER [the second section of the Six Foot Track]**

This is a long walk which covers about 12 Km but no one has to walk the full length. You need only walk as far as you wish. The last time this walk was undertaken was in 1999 in October. The Cox's River is a delightful place and in 1999 we encountered an Echidna on the track and this was a precious memory.

**MEET in the MEGALONG VALLEY 14 KM from BLACKHEATH where the SIX FOOT TRACK crosses the Megalong Valley Rd. and the Cemetery is on the right AT 9.00 A. M. or at MERRY GARTH at 8.00 A.M.**

**[Note that you will pass through the little village, cross over the river at the ford and your destination will be about half a Km beyond that point.]**

Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.  
[Mary]

**FOR OUR FIRST JULY WALK on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2004**

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

**FOR OUR SECOND JULY WALK on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2004.**

Contact **Libby Raines** on 4756 2121 before Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2004.

**FOR OUR AUGUST WALK**

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

We wish to thank all those members who have so willingly renewed their membership donations. It is very gratifying that we continue to have so much support.

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



30th July 2004



NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

# Walking Tracks - Grose Valley