
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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October 2004

LEURA CASCADES TO POOL OF SILOAM AND

Our September Walk

Leura Cascades to Gordon
Falls;
The Pool of Siloam and
Lyrebird Dell

Friday 17th September 2004



Spring in the Bush

GORDON FALLS; THE LYREBIRD DELL

the Flying Fox Lookout. This area is so named because it once contained the top staging point for the flying fox which serviced the now defunct sewerage works on the valley floor. This lookout provided the first partial glimpse of Mt Solitary framed between the cliff lines below the Three Sisters and the Bridal Veil View Lookout.

This was one of those idyllic days. A cloudless sky, hardly a breath of wind and an invigorating chill in the air. In this exhilarating atmosphere the sixteen members who gathered at the Leura Cascades carpark could hardly contain themselves.

This walk offered many diversions and a host of scenes to excite the senses. We set off past the rather kitsch but to my mind very endearing mock rock shelter shed and toilets - gives a whole new meaning to finding a convenient rock. Having passed beneath the artificial stone arch we entered the real environment of the upper reaches of Leura Falls Creek.

Diversion one was to walk downstream beside the Leura Cascades to the large rock overhang which affords a view back up the terraces of the cascades. Returning upstream we veered onto the well trodden path which is the Prince Henry Cliff Walk. A short climb brings us to

Diversion two was the brief climb, up then down, to the Bridal Veil View Lookout. There were several examples of the Broad-leaf Geebung (*Persoonia levis*) beside the track. Their dark flaky bark imparts an aged appearance to these shrubs. Curly Sedge or Old Mans Whiskers (*Caustis flexuosa*) was abundant here. The morning sun glinted off their glossy light green gracefully coiled branchlets.

The view from this lookout is stunning. The main feature is of course the Bridal Veil Falls, however in these precipitationally challenged times the falls mimic a silken ribbon sliding down the dark rock face rather than a full blown veil. On the nearby cliff edges there are several Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea* sp) some with their scapes and flower spikes contorted into convoluted shapes.

It was decided a perfect spot for morning tea was a rocky area above this lookout among the

Old Man and Hairpin Banksia (*Banksia serrata* and *Banksia spinulosa*). These Banksia carried few flowers at this time however a couple of Big Bad Banksia Men were sighted peering out from behind the foliage.

Back on the main track a few Slender Rice-flowers (*Pimelea linifolia ssp linifolia*) were sighted. Indeed for most of this walk we were to be treated to the beauty of these white tubular flowers held aloft in starburst heads on slender stems. Another almost constant companion for the day was the Pouched Coral-fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*) which decorated banks beside the track.

A short walk brought us to diversion three, Tarpeian Rock Lookout. Here, suddenly, the full grandeur of distant views was laid out before us. Centre stage and most dominant was Mt Solitary, its talus slopes topped with glowing sandstone cliffs. The ridge line dipped gently to the right of Mt Solitary then rose to the jagged ramparts of the Ruined Castle. Stage right contained the imposing walls of Narrow Neck while stage left was occupied by the Kedumba Walls below Kings Tableland. The background was filled in by the impressive form of Mt Cloudmaker and the more distant Mt Colong to the right of Mt Solitary. To the left were Mt Jellore and Mt Gibraltar (The Gib) near Mittagong. We stood enthralled by the spectacle. The clarity of the distant views was amazing while the forest canopy below carried large red tinted patches of new tip growth.

We spent considerable time here taking in the magnificence of the scene. The landscape belied the name of the lookout. Tarpeian Rock in Roman times was a place from which traitors were thrown. The name comes from Tarpeia, a vestal virgin of Roman legend who betrayed Rome to the Sabines of central Italy. One can but ponder whether any double-crossing vestal virgins have passed this way.

Continuing along the main track we are treated to the sight of the tiny pure white flowers of

the Coral Heath (*Epacris microphylla*). Nearby the short lived but beautiful bright mauve flowers of a Native Iris - the Silky Purple-flag (*Patersonia sericea*) light up the track side.

Off to the right through the tree cover are tantalising glimpses of the valley below and of the distant views. The track swings to the left, dips slightly and we are in a more moist environment below Fernery Cave. King Ferns (*Todea barbara*) dominate here interspersed with a variety of smaller ferns, some carrying bright red new growth.

We climb to Olympian Rock, drop down to a small bridge which spans a quite deep chasm and once again unimpeded distant views into the valley open. This scene is overlooked by a large effigy of the cartoon character Boofhead which stands above the outdoor theatre belonging to the nearby Leuralla property. The significance of the installation escapes me completely.

Proceeding past Elysian Rock, aptly named after a mythical place of perfect happiness, the track meanders along the cliff edge. Soon we are at diversion four, a short stroll down to Gordon Falls Lookout. The decided lack of flow in Gordon Creek at this time makes a mockery of the name Gordon Falls - more a bit of a stumble really.

We settled down just above this lookout to take advantage of the extensive views while partaking of lunch. From this point a full rear view of the Three Sisters was on display. I'm not going near any quips along the lines of "Does my backside look big in this?"

While here we were entertained by a Pink Galah apparently attending to its young in a deep hollow high on a tree trunk. It clung to the outside of the entrance occasionally bobbing its head inside then keeping a wary eye on us intruders. It then disappeared completely into the depths of the hollow and reappeared with just its head protruding -

tilting from side to side as it watched us leaving this lovely spot.

After heading across the picnic area we began the descent toward Gordon Creek. On the higher slopes we moved through stands of the Cliff Mallee Ash (*Eucalyptus cunninghamii*) and some fine examples of the Heath Banksia (*Banksia erectifolia*). On the lower slope we enter the rainforest where Coachwood (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*) and Possumwood (*Quintinia sieberi*) are present. Soon we reach a junction in the track where we make diversion five to the Pool of Siloam.

Around a sharp bend and we are looking down upon a delightful clear pool fed by a trickle of water running down a moss covered rock face. A clean sandy beach borders the downstream side of the pool and a dark cave faces the far side through a screen of lush ferns. This is the Pool of Siloam, a charming tranquil scene. One can only wish a peaceful environment could exist in the region from which its name is derived - a pool in Jerusalem.

{ Note my apologies for misspelling Siloam in the previous newsletter—Mary }

We retrace our steps to the junction in the track and head toward Lyrebird Dell. This section of track follows the upper reaches of Gordon Creek past a curious rock formation supporting a tall thin spire. These dark rocks form a perfect background for the smooth brilliant white trunks of a stand of young Blue Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*).

At a small wooden bridge we paused while Libby placed a tall stout stick in a broken plank to warn others of the danger. During this interlude some Bushy Clubmoss (*Lycopodium deuterodensum*) was noted beside the track. A small clump was seen closer to Leura Cascades, here however was an extensive swath rising up the hillside. The resulting effect was that of a miniature pine forest receding into the distance. The ancestors of these plants grew in large tree like forms around 350 million years ago and their remains today form the black coal deposits of the northern hemisphere.

In the vicinity of Lyrebird Dell there are several large rock overhangs. Looking up at the ceiling of one of these is like viewing the surface of the moon for it is pock marked with hundreds of crater like depressions, unlike any rock surface this writer has seen anywhere in the Blue Mountains. We rested a while in this delightful area and thoughts drifted to what it may have been like here 8000 years ago when the local Aboriginal people used these shelters.

Having re-crossed the creek we made a short climb past the hanging swamp along a path which had the year 1918 embedded in it in ceramic tiles (a mere blink compared with the Aboriginal occupation) and we emerged onto Lone Pine Avenue. A stroll along this avenue returned us to the Gordon Falls Picnic Area.

Here the final divergent diversion occurred. The party split in two with ten deciding to follow the road back to the Leura Cascades carpark in order to view the Spring gardens along the way. The remaining six members retraced our outward steps along Prince Henry Cliff Walk taking in the views of this morning now subtly changed under the effects of the afternoon light.

We lingered for quite some time over the usual cup of tea back at the picnic area. We made very short work of the delicious cake kindly baked by Geoff Kelly's wife Jenny, although Geoff insisted he provided the crucial input of pressing a button on the oven or something.

This was a relatively short walk but absolutely stunning on such a glorious day. How fortunate we are to have an area of such beauty and grandeur within easy reach. It must be jealously guarded for future generations. Let us hope World Heritage Listing will achieve that.

To reinforce what John Cardy has expressed with passion and deep honesty, let me quote

from an extract in the newsletter of the Blue Mts. Historical Society April –May 2004.

Some Childhood Memories of Leura – before WW2 –John Ferris

In the early 1930's Lone Pine Drive, leading from the War Memorial entrance at the foot of Malvern Road to the foot of Gordon Road near Gordon Falls, was a peaceful avenue of considerable beauty. Well maintained garden plots in quite attractive timber and wire enclosures placed at intervals through out the area contained trees and bore names of 1914-1918 Great War local soldiers who lost their lives. Features of the area were the armistice memorial steps leading to **Lyrebirds Dell**, a picnic spot of peace and beauty, and further along, a small grassed area with seats and the inevitable cannon.

Lone Pine Drive was a place of sufficient beauty to attract tourist coaches. However as the years passed the cages containing the memorial trees collapsed and any memorial trees that survived merged in to the remaining bush land. Trees were felled near **Lyrebirds Dell** to allow a parking area for tourist coaches, and as the coaches became longer and larger they could not negotiate the bends near the cannon and its peaceful picnic area. These works and the gradual removal of gum trees from the fringes of the avenue left the area **so scarred** that it no longer attracted tourist coaches anyway. The cannon and seats fell into disrepair, and the earthworks to extend the local cricket ground became visible, and now the only reminders of a peaceful area are the memorial entrance and the memorial steps to **Lyrebirds Dell**, and **even the Dell gradually lost its charm."**

This description reminds us how easily places of beauty can deteriorate through neglect and no one accepting responsibility or understanding what has taken place in the past.

It is good news to know that in 1997 Lone Pine Avenue, the Gate Way Memorials and Gordon Falls Reserve were rededicated and The Lone Pine plant donated to the Blue Mts Hist. Society was given to the Gordon Falls Bushcare Group who planted it in Lone Pine

Avenue at a special ceremony on ANZAC Day 2004.

John Cardy mentioned in his account of the walk to Gordon Falls the presence of that curious character 'Boofhead'. He had no idea how it came to be there. 'Boofhead' was placed there by the Evatt Family who own the wonderful Museum across the road 'Leuralla'. I have spoken with one of the people closely associated with Leuralla and he tells me that 'Boofhead' was designed by that well known artist, Peter Kingston when he was producing his wonderful drawings of Luna Park. The anecdotal story is that the family planned to present Greek Classical Plays in the amphitheatre on that site but there was much opposition from local residents. Instead 'Boofhead' was erected. My informant tells me that this is half the truth. Mr Evatt had a great fascination for Comic characters such as 'Pop Eye' but 'Pop Eye' was too difficult to create in the material being used. 'Boofhead' & 'Olive Oil' were more easily made !!

Our October Walk

DANES WAY, THE FIRE TRAIL at MT IRVINE and THE RAMPARTS.

FRIDAY 15TH OCTOBER 2004

We traversed this walk in 2001 and in 1998. It is always especially motivating to tread the familiar paths of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. This walk gives us an experience of rainforest perhaps a little touched by the hand of humanity but nevertheless returning to its natural state in many places and also the experience of that divide from rainforest to sandstone and the lovely outlook from the Ramparts, a rock formation aptly named.

MEET ON DANES WAY MT IRVINE outside the property 'CARISBROOK' at 9.00 a.m. or at 'MERRY GARTH' at 8.30 a.m. Here a car shuffle will be arranged.

Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.

FURTHER WALKS

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 Pierce's Pass entrance. { Note that this the second Friday & will be the evening of our end of year Barbecue. }

BUSH CARE

This very important work continues unabated. Our morning at Sloan Reserve in September resulted in the removal of remnants of ivy, blackberry which had dared to reappear!

Meet in October on Friday, 8th October 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 9.00a.m.

For further information contact Beth Raines at 4756 2121.

The Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Bush Care Group would like to thank the Bushwalking Group for providing funds to purchase four small holding hand saws for the Bush Care Group to use. These saws will be especially useful for cutting holly trees at ground level so that they can be poisoned. This will make the task much easier.

During the past 6 years the Bush Care Group has been working in the reserves and along the roadside at Mount Wilson and Mt Irvine. It has removed truck loads of holly, ivy, honeysuckle, blackberry and laurel from the bush enabling the rain forest and natural bush to return to its natural state. [Libby R.]

A NATURE STORY

"I had a rather nice encounter with a Kookaburra recently. I was digging in the garden and he flew down, landing on the ground between my feet and the spade. I must

admit I was surprised and decided to talk quietly to him as he sat there looking up at me. He moved closer to my feet and proceeded to eat a large centipede which I had unearthed while digging. His tail rested on my foot and he seemed quite unafraid. Eventually I thought I must get back to work so I moved my foot slightly; he flew off a little way sitting there watching, hoping for another tasty morsel, I guess." Libby R.

MEMBERS NEWS

Recently Margaret Morgan, Ern Morgan's wife has been ill in hospital but is now with her family resting and gradually improving. We send her and Ern our warmest good wishes with many memories of our times together.

FOR OUR OCTOBER WALK on 15th October 2004

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

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