
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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DEEP PASS IN THE

OUR AUGUST WALK

DEEP PASS in the WOLLEMI NATIONAL PARK

Friday 21st August 2009

Great Britain had Queen Victoria, Africa has Victoria Falls, Australia has the state of Victoria but on these walks we are often blessed with our own Victoria to brighten our existence. To prove that she has one, Victoria today brought along a friend, Helen. After searching in vain for an early morning coffee shop along the Bell Road she arrived at the Zig Zag Railway bringing the number of walkers to twenty-five.

Libby quickly had everyone organised into a reduced number of vehicles (many thanks to those who kindly provided 4WDs) and we set off on the twenty seven kilometre drive along unsealed roads to Deep Pass. Thankfully the roads were in better condition than on the last occasion we were in this area. Our little convoy raised a plume of dust as we made our way along Old Bells Line of Road through Newnes State Forest. We turned onto the Glowworm Tunnel Road near the evocatively named area of Bungleboori, proceeded past the Twelve Mile Pine Plantation and turned onto the side road, which runs past Cockatoo Hill.



Spring in the Bush

WOLLEMI NAT PARK

Extensive logging has been carried out in this area since our last visit, dramatically changing the appearance of the landscape. Soon after turning left to head toward Deep Pass doubts began to build in Libby's mind about the terrain through which we were travelling. After a kilometre or so Libby was convinced the lay of the land was not as it should be and that we had taken a

wrong turn. Retracing our path we arrived at the correct turn off, disguised by the now bare area left after the logging operations. Back on the right track we shortly arrived at the parking area above Deep Pass.

We made our way down the rather steep access track and climbed onto a rocky prominence where we paused for morning tea. This vantage point offered a view down into the Deep Pass area and across to the cliff faces beyond. The area surrounding pagoda-like formations above the cliffs was studded with the golden blossom of wattles and a dark cleft in the cliff face beckoned to be explored.

Closer at hand, nestling in a sheltered sunny little nook on this rock outcrop, were a couple of examples of the Pinnate Boronia (*Boronia pinnata*); one in glorious full bloom, the other loaded with tiny pink balls about to explode into flower. Also clinging to this rock, adjacent to its host tree, is an *Atkinsonia ligustrina*. This uncommon root-parasitic shrub is restricted to the Blue Mountains and

is a member of the mistletoe family; it is named after Louisa Atkinson (1834 – 1872), first woman journalist in Australia, author, artist and botanist who once lived at Kurrajong Heights.

We continue down the slope past clusters of the Native Holly or Prickly Shaggy-pea (*Podolobium ilicifolium*) displaying their glossy sharp pointed holly-like leaves. Passing between the stooping fronds of some King Ferns (*Todea barbara*) we cross a trickling stream and emerge onto an open grassy area which once formed part of a farm hidden away in this secluded little valley. What a glorious spot! The cleared area is dotted with clumps of Spiny-headed Mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*), the unusual horizontal patterns on the vertical cliff face beside Nayook Creek gives an inkling of the ancient ruins of Angkor Wat yet the golden glow of the abundance of wattle blossom confirms the region.

The mysterious deep cleft we had seen earlier now beckons. We cross Nayook Creek and make our way through a carpet of Common Bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*) passing close to the cliff face which is festooned with Dragons Tail (*Dracophyllum secundum*) and dappled with the red flowers of the *Epacris reclinata*. We climb past a huge boulder which has been tightly clasped by a giant Eucalypt; its trunk, hollowed by fire, would accommodate several people. There before us is a small aperture in the cliff through which, one by one, we squeeze; some, including this writer finding it more squeezey than others.

Passing through that opening transported us into another world. We are delivered into a narrow chasm no more than a metre and a half wide; this first gallery leads us about twenty-five metres to a tee junction where a second gallery runs at right angles for around fifty metres. High above a slash of sky provides an eerie light in the bowels of this gigantic mass of rock which has been rent apart by unimaginable forces of nature.

After spending some time absorbing the atmosphere of this special place we lined up to squeeze feet first back through that narrow

aperture; a flash of light made me think this was perhaps a breech birth born again experience but it was only the camera recording this undignified event.

As we all straightened ourselves out after emerging from the cliff face Victoria, who seems to have an eye for these things, noted that John Meade was having yet another wardrobe malfunction; she had noted a similar occurrence on our Little Zig Zag walk in April.

We meandered across the valley floor to the cliff opposite. Here wind erosion has resulted in the colours of the sandstone being highlighted; tones of off white, gold, brown and red. In a weather-protected area beneath the overhang is a pair of faint hand stencils. Victoria and I decided to ignore the cynics among us and accept these stencils as genuine Aboriginal rock paintings. Victoria's thoughts however must have drifted off into the realms of the Dreamtime as, for reasons unknown to me, she made a statement along the lines that her husband wasn't only a figment of her imagination – time for a strong coffee Victoria!

Back at the clearing a large fallen tree trunk provided a convenient seat on which to rest while having lunch.

Following lunch some decided to stay and enjoy the sun while the rest of the group headed off to walk through Deep Pass itself.

This is a beautiful walk through an enclosed understorey beneath the tall forest trees. We pass many Waratahs (*Telopea speciosissima*) just beginning to bud up in preparation for their spectacular Spring display. Wattles abound including the Prickly Moses (*Acacia ulicifolia*), their soft pale cream flowers belying the sharpness of their needle-like leaves. Also present are the shrubby Sunshine Wattles (*Acacia terminalis*), a very showy small tree possibly the Fern-leaf Wattle (*Acacia filicifolia*) and a particularly attractive small tree sporting masses of deep gold flowers possibly Hamilton's Wattle (*Acacia hamiltoniana*) an uncommon species which is known to grow on the Newnes Plateau.

Many examples of the Hairpin Banksia (*Banksia spinulosa* var. *spinulosa*) decorate the area, their flower spikes sitting atop branch junctions. Another attractive shrub noted was a Beard-heath (*Leucopogon* sp) carrying tiny white five-petalled tubular flowers.

We walked through the pass to a crest which is a watershed. Rain that falls on this spot flows either south into Dingo Creek and finds its way into the Wollangambe River via Bungleboori Creek or it flows north into Nayook Creek and is carried to the same river but via a very different path.

On our return to the clearing we diverted up onto a rock shelf that runs along below rock overhangs. In the dry sandy soil sheltered by the overhangs many Ant Lions have decided to construct their little conical traps. Similar Ant Lions attracted the attention of Charles Darwin in 1836 during his journey to Bathurst. He had been lying on a sunny bank at Wallerawang reflecting on the strange character of animals in this country when he noticed some of these traps; he wrote in his diary:

“----- I observed the conical pitfall of a Lion-Ant: - a fly fell in & immediately disappeared: then came a large but unwary Ant: His struggles to escape being very violent, the little jets of sand ----- were promptly directed against him. – His fate however was better than that of the poor fly’s: -----”

This encounter with an insect so similar but only half the size of European Ant Lions was yet another step on the way to his theory of evolution.

Once more we returned to the clearing and set off to explore the tiny stream which is an upper branch of Nayook Creek. We are now in a far moister environment, the creek is lined with Black Wattle (*Callicoma serratifolia*) and we are treated to the pleasant sound of water burbling along the little brook. Presently high water-worn cliffs encroach on the stream forming an enclosed canyon. These cliffs display intricately curved erosion patterns, in one case an almost perfectly circular cavity runs horizontally back into the cliff face. Near

a large cavern beside the little stream we encounter once more the uncommon Black or Southern Sassafras (*Atherosperma moschatum*) as seen at Lyrebird Dell on our July walk.

Some mild boulder hopping brings us to a charming little rock pool. A silver ribbon of water drops between moss and lichen encrusted rocks into this deep pond. We linger here absorbing the tranquillity of this hidden treasure, allowing the serene atmosphere to recharge our batteries.

Reluctantly we returned to the clearing once more and with deep regret began climbing the track which leads us out of this stunning little valley. The afternoon light played on the clouds of dust raised as we made our way back to Clarence. Following the usual cuppa we headed for home after a memorable day exploring the profound beauty of Deep Pass.

Victoria on the other hand embarked on a mission; Victoria was desperately seeking Vittoria, and lots of it.

John C

Member News

A note from Mary Reynolds

My grateful appreciation for the kind words of concern for me expressed in recent newsletters and for the beautiful flowers, a product of Western Australia. They continued decorating our lounge room long after I left hospital.

I miss bushwalking but am deeply grateful for all the years I was able to participate from 1990 to 2005.

Mary

Vale John Glass

Longer-term walkers with this group will remember John and Marie Glass, a delightful couple who began walking with the group in 1995. Their happy demeanour added so much to our enjoyment of the walks which they attended. Sadly, on 1st July, John departed this world to walk ethereal paths in another place. Our thoughts are with you and your family Marie.

OUR SEPTEMBER WALK

Friday 18th September 2009

**A Verdant Valley, Rippling River,
Spectacular Escarpments and Rambling
Ruins.**

The Pipeline Track in the Wolgan Valley

The group last visited this venue in July 2000.

This is a walk of approximately eight kilometres (four kilometres each way) with the last kilometre on the outward journey very steep and possibly slippery. The reward for making the effort is spectacular views over the Wolgan River. An alternative for those who wish to spend an easier day in this tranquil valley is to wade across the river shallows and explore the extensive ruins of the Newnes Oil Shale Works while the rest of the group walks.

A longish drive is involved so an early start is required. Meet at Coles car park in the Lithgow Valley Shopping Area at the end closest to St Patricks School at 8.30am or at Merry Garth at 8.00am.

The drive from Lithgow to Newnes is approximately 54km and a vehicle rationalisation will be organised at the Lithgow meeting spot. Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea (and a towel if you intend wading).

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 (after 7pm) or Helen and John Cardy on mobile only 0418 646 487. Remember it is important that you let us know in advance if you are coming on a walk.

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 16th October 2009 – Du Faur's Rocks area and the Northern Fire Trail at Mt Wilson

Friday 20th November 2009 – Fortress Ridge off the Mt Hay road near Leura

BUSH CARE – SPECIAL EVENT!!!

It is just over TEN YEARS since the inception of the Bush Care Group in March 1999. To celebrate this landmark event a morning tea is to be held during Bush Care at Sloan Reserve at 10am on Friday 11th September when a presentation by BMCC will be made in appreciation of the work done over that period. All are welcome, indeed encouraged, to attend to show support for this important enterprise.

Future Dates

11th September 2009 at Sloan Reserve (Note change of venue and celebration)

9th October 2009 at TBA

13th November 2009 at Wynne Reserve

Contact Libby on 4756 2121 for details