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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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Volume 20 Issue 1

January 2010

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## BIRRABANG RIDGE

# OUR DECEMBER WALK 2009

## **BIRRABANG RIDGE AND YILEEN SPUR off the BELLS LINE OF ROAD**

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2009**

**But First:**

### **THIS WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS**

In January many, perhaps most people in the world were happy to witness the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States. Probably even happier were the passengers on US Airways flight 1549 to have as their pilot Captain Chesley Sullenberg III as he successfully 'landed' their stricken plane on the Hudson River in January. Among all this happiness (and I suspect not a little praying) in the world, how appropriate that we ventured down to Happy Valley and Cathedral Creek for our January walk. The sublime beauty of the little waterfall cascading into the rock pool in this enclosed valley and the crazily slanting Tree Ferns dotting the banks of Cathedral Creek are just two of the many delights in this enchanting area.

We explored Popes Glen and Pulpit Rock in February. This is a stunning walk. After meandering along the shady banks of the tiny creek that flows through the sheltered environs



## AND YILEEN SPUR

of Popes Glen, one is suddenly confronted with the awe-inspiring grandeur of the gaping gulf that is Govett Gorge. Silver ribbons of water dropping over golden sandstone cliffs were on view as we made our way to the imposing prominence of Pulpit Rock. Popes and pulpits were probably on the minds of many in rural Victoria during February as those horrendous bushfires swept across the countryside consuming everything in their paths.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> March this year Anna Bligh became the first woman in Australia's history to be elected premier. On the 14<sup>th</sup> March 1836 Charles Darwin, on board HMS Beagle, left the waters of King Georges Sound thus completing his visit to Australia. He spent only two months of his epic five-year around the world voyage in Australia, yet the observations he made while here weighed heavily on the development of his theory of evolution. It was only proper that in March in the year of the 200th anniversary of his birth and the 150th anniversary of the publication of his seminal work *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* that we retrace his steps along Jamison Creek, 173 years after he walked this way. Delightful cascades along Jamison Creek, majestic views into Jamison Valley and the power of Wentworth Falls are but some of the memories stored away from this walk. Narrow tunnels and canyons and

Summer in the Bush

serpentine stepping stones along the middle of Greaves Creek and the yawning mouth of Walls Cave, which we also visited today, remain imprinted on the mind.

By April this year Australia's richest 20 per cent had lost, on average, \$400,000 each due to the global financial crisis. It was pure happenstance that our April walk took us to Bushrangers Cave on the Little Zig Zag then on to Wilsons Glen and Rienits Pass at Mt Victoria. Some of the standouts were indeed the large cave itself, open woodlands, rich rainforest and magical views into the Megalong Valley. An added bonus was a stroll down Berghofer Pass where the engineering feats of the early 1900's were on show.

Forget Bob the Builder, during the month of May the ultimate in Do It Yourself ingenuity was employed by a Victorian country GP. He used a handyman's drill to bore into the skull of a young victim of a bike accident to drain a blood clot in the boy's brain. This brave action saved the young boy from ending up at a similar destination to our May walk – the Megalong Cemetery. We followed the first section of the Six Foot Track which drops down through Nellies Glen and follows Megalong Creek toward the aforementioned cemetery. Initially we were presented with expansive views of the Megalong Valley, then the intimate closeness of the rainforest, out to open forest with a host of gnarled Scribbly Gums, a bubbling creek and open pastures; what more could you want?

In June a matriarch of the Melbourne gangland milieu found herself in prison on remand on a murder charge. It is reported she had earlier confided to friends that she wished she could move to a gated community; shows wishes can come true. We were wishing for the fog to lift as we set off on our June walk to Narrow Neck and Castle Head. Watching features in the bush disappear and re-emerge in the swirling mists, walkers up ahead being swathed in fog, nebulous shrouds on the flanks of Mount Solitary as the mist rose from the valleys fulfilling our earlier wishes; these are images which remain from this day.

The moon obscured the sun for just over six and a half minutes in July, the longest solar eclipse of the twenty-first century; if you missed it there will be another in 2132. Rather than sit around and wait we set off on our July walk to Leura Cascades, Gordon Falls, the Pool of Siloam and Lyrebird Dell. Outshining the stunning cascades, leaping waterfalls and panoramic views was the opportunity to celebrate Libby's birthday – a very special birthday considering her serious health problems of 2008.

Deep depression engulfed many Australians in August when England won the deciding test by 197 runs. Deep Pass in the Wollemi National Park was the destination for our August walk. The exquisite little waterfall dropping into a deep rock pool on Nayook Creek, exploring the deep narrow clefts in the cliffs, the even deeper despondency creeping up on Victoria due to her severe coffee deprivation; just a few of my memories of this day.

September found us walking the Pipeline Track in the Wolgan Valley, the same month that songwriter/performer Leonard Cohen turned 75 and the US budget deficit totalled 1.4 trillion US dollars. Neither fact has much to do with our walk other than the little Pagoda Daisy we saw was also an impressive performer and the absolutely outstanding views from the lookout were worth at least as much as the US deficit.

Barack Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October; Peter Costello finally resigned in the same month. These events are poles apart I know but both happened in October, the month we walked the Waterfall Track, visited the Pheasants Cave and strolled along the Northern Fire Trail at Mt Wilson. The Waterfall Track was as peaceful as ever, the views from Table Top Rock magnificent and the bush at this time was illuminated by many Waratahs; show ponies of the bush.

Kevin Rudd's approval rating slipped slightly in November but, fair shake of the sauce bottle, it was still 68 per cent which isn't too bad. No need just yet for him to retreat to the

castle and pull up the drawbridge. Our November foray however led us to rather defensive locales; Fortress Rock, Fortress Ridge and Fortress Hill near Leura. (I had a rant about the ants on this walk and soon after came across an apt quote on the desk calendar: 'If ants are such busy workers, how come they find time to go to all the picnics?') We were treated to abundant wildflowers, spectacular precipices, stunning valley views along with oppressive heat which everyone handled rather well.

The heat of course was a signal that summer was here, which leads us to our December walk, the last for the year.

Welcome rain fell in the mountains the night before this walk and indeed became quite heavy early in the morning. By the time however that twenty-four walkers had gathered at the Mt Wilson turnoff from the Bells Line of Road there were but light misty showers.

Though the venue is so close to Mt Wilson this was a new walk for the group. We headed south from Bells Line of Road through the area that was burnt in November of 2006. The intervening three years has resulted in the classic regrowth which occurs after the mountain bushland is scorched. Soft feathery growth sprouts from adventitious buds on the trunks of many of the Eucalypts and on the occasional She-oak. Stunted remnants of the Mountain Devils (*Lambertia formosa*), various Drumsticks (*Isopogon sp*) and Geebung (*Persoonia sp*) shoot lush new growth adorned with flowers. The fire has opened seed follicles of many Banksias as the charred remains of these shrubs are surrounded by dozens of flourishing seedlings. It is always fascinating to observe how vigorously the bush regenerates following the devastation of fire.

We pass a large flat rock outcrop protruding from the low growth to our left, crest a small hillock and there before us is a superb southwesterly view over the upper Grose Gorge. The cliffline which runs from Thor Head back toward Asgard Head on the other

side of the Grose River rises from a pillow of fog lying in the valley. As we stand taking in this grand panorama a tongue of mist rises up and licks the face of Dalpura Head on our side of the gorge.

After spending some time taking in the ever-changing scene before us we continue on toward Yileen Spur. The track leads us through some low Blue Mountains Mallee Ash (*Eucalyptus stricta*) and a smattering of Dwarf She-oak (*Allocasuarina nana*) displaying prominent deep tan male flower spikes on the ends of short stems. The Broad-leaf Geebung (*Persoonia levis*) is also present here, their flaky bark darker than normal, possibly blackened by the fire. We reach a small rocky bluff which affords views across Yileen Gully to Liversidge Hill; several hanging swamps were conspicuous on the slopes. Dropping down off this little bluff we swing left and continue across a more open ridge; the peaked profile of Rigby Hill stands out against the clouds of fog now rising from the valley. Further afield a puff of mist sat in the saddle of Mount Banks creating a fascinating vision of that eminent landmark.

On reaching a rock shelf that carried some rather sculptural outcrops we paused for morning tea. 'Birrabang' is believed to be an Aboriginal term for 'rest' and 'Yileen' a term for 'dream'. What a magnificent spot to rest awhile and to dream while watching wispy fingers of mist reach for the sky as they rise from the Grose Gorge.

Soon the mist came swirling across the gully bringing a very light shower and we turned away from the magical scene before us to retrace our steps back through the bush which was glistening with moisture.

On reaching Bells Line of Road some among us were so engrossed in conversation they crossed the road only to realise their cars were on the side they had just come from. This crossing and recrossing did not however add to the road-kill and everyone arrived safely at their vehicles; now to Merry Garth for the end of year and Christmas celebratory luncheon.

Once again we are indebted for, and indeed very appreciative of, the generous hospitality of Keith, Libby and Beth in welcoming us into their gorgeous garden and charming home for this get-together. The new format of a buffet style lunch with everyone seated together in the breezeway worked very well; many thanks to all who had a hand in organising the lunch and to those who contributed salads, breads, cakes and slices, fruit and berries, etc to share. Many thanks also to Fred Roberts for his words of appreciation, on behalf of all members of the group, to those who give so much of their time to ensure the smooth running of the group activities throughout the year.

Well, that was the year that was; a year of wonderful and wonderfully varied walks with great company. There is a fine camaraderie that exists in this group; thank you all for making it so.

John C

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### **Lost or Mislaid Property Department**

Libby advises that the following items were left at Merry Garth after the luncheon:

2 White Plates – ‘Corelle’

1 White China Bowl (medium sized)

1 Long Black Handled Serving Spoon

(I will refrain from making any comment about dishes running away with spoons)

Please contact Libby if any of these items sound familiar.

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### **OUR JANUARY WALK**

#### **Friday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010**

(Apologies for the incorrect date given in the last newsletter – it’s the gremlins you know)

**Delightful Grottos and Mossy Nooks, a High-Domed Cave and ‘The Lady of the Bower’**

**Fairy Bower and Coxs Cave at Mt Victoria (with a possible diversion to Sunset Rock)**

The group last visited this venue in November 2000. This is a relatively easy walk through fern-filled gullies with moss covered rock walls and steps; a steel ladder leads to Coxs Cave. There is a total ascent and descent of about 250 metres around the circuit.

**Meet in the Fairy Bower Picnic Area near the Old Toll House just east of Mt Victoria Township at 9.30am or 9.00am at Merry Garth.**

If coming from Mt Victoria turn right off the highway **before crossing the railway bridge** and go down past the Toll House. If travelling from Katoomba direction turn left immediately after crossing the railway bridge to access the park.

Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.

**Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 (after 7pm) or Helen and John Cardy on 9871 3661 or on mobile 0418 646 487 if you need to leave a message.**

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### **FUTURE WALKS** (Tentative schedule)

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2010 – Valley of the Waters, National Pass, Slacks Stairs, Wentworth Pass, Valley of the Waters. (A circuit of approximately 5km mostly in sheltered forest and rainforest but there is a descent and ascent of about 400 metres)

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2010 – Carlon Creek and Breakfast Creek to the Coxs River. (A solid walk – over 12km return with a long steady climb to finish)

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### **MEMBERSHIP**

Included with this issue are renewal forms for membership of the group.

In July 2009 Helen Cardy took over the task of looking after the membership and financial details of the Group from Helen Freeman.

We sincerely thank Helen Freeman for her expertise and diligence in handling these details over the preceding six years and hope to see her return to walking with the group in

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2010 – many thanks for your efforts over those six years Helen.

The decision was taken in June 2009 to close the Group's cheque account thus saving bank fees of \$84 per year. Changes to procedures in printing of the newsletter mean all the group's transactions can now be carried out on a cash basis and we no longer have a need to write cheques to pay accounts.

You will note that cheques for contributions are now to be made payable to HL Cardy and to be sent to her at 14 Gum Grove Place, WEST PENNANT HILLS NSW 2125. Cash payments of course can still be made to Libby or Helen Cardy.

Of course full records of income and expenditure will continue to be maintained and a financial statement issued mid-year.

It would be appreciated if completed forms were returned as early as possible in the new year.

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### MEMBER NEWS ONE

Geoff Kelly has recently been laid low with what was initially a mysterious chest ailment. A necessary short stay in hospital led to a diagnosis of whooping cough; Geoff assures me it is something you definitely do not want to get!

Hope you are fighting fit again soon Geoff and that you will be able to participate in at least some walks with us in 2010.

### MEMBER NEWS TWO

Some of you may already be aware that Christine Allen and Michael Kluckner are shortly moving back to Canada where Michael will be taking up an offer too good to refuse in Vancouver.

Your cheery presence in the group will be sadly missed Christine and Michael; we wish you both well living under the red maple leaf again and hope to perhaps see you some time in the future back in the land down-under.

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## Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

### EMERGENCY LOCATOR BEACON

We have had a pleasing response from walkers with contributions toward the cost of the Emergency Locator Beacon. Many thanks to all those who have responded with donations toward this important piece of equipment.

### **BUSH CARE**

**Bush Care is held on the second Friday of each month from 9am to Noon. Any help, even for a short time, would be appreciated both by the other workers and by the native vegetation.**

**8<sup>th</sup> January 2010 at Wynne Reserve**

**12<sup>th</sup> February 2010 at Wynne Reserve**

**Contact Libby on 4756 2121 for details**