
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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CENTENNIAL GLEN

OUR JUNE WALK

CENTENNIAL GLEN and PORTERS PASS at BLACKHEATH

Friday 18th June 2010

In 1827 at The Rocks in Sydney Town, a son was born to a convict couple; they named him Timothy. He became a tinsmith, married Lydia Boulton in 1850 and they had eight children; only three girls survived. The family found themselves living in the Blackheath area at a place once called Paradise or Paradise Hill. It was so named after Timothy's daughter Amy responded to a query of where she lived with the reply "Over in paradise". The name was adopted locally and remained in use for many years. Timothy liked to go hunting in the Kanimbla Valley and around 1886 he found a route, near his home, down the escarpment to the valley floor.

Today we are to climb that pass which took on his family name of Porter. We will also go by their little piece of paradise, where the family home was located on the corner of Cecil and Kanimbla Roads, as we stroll along the streets to make our way to Fort Rock.

Following what was a very ordinary rainy, cold and windy Thursday in the mountains, we were treated to a glorious morning for the



Winter in the Bush

AND PORTERS PASS

walk when we met in Centennial Glen Road. Appropriately there were twenty-one walkers present today as the group began its twenty-first year of walks.

We welcomed back Jan Newman and Ray Harrington who have not been able to join us for some time and it was good to have Fred Roberts back in the fold. We also greeted two friends of Barbara Harry – Gay Revie who was walking with the group for the first time and Sandra Draper who has joined us on previous occasions.

We set off through the low heath containing Dwarf She-oak (*Allocasuarina nana*), Conesticks (*Petrophile pulchella*) and Heath Banksia (*Banksia ericifolia*) with the occasional stand of Blue Mountains Mallee Ash (*Eucalyptus stricta*) extending above the heath line, their slender stems bending to the stiff breeze. It is so invigorating walking in these conditions. The chill wind generates waves that undulate across the top of the heath while creating a rhythmic whisper as it caresses the swaying vegetation. The ironstone scree scattered across rock platforms emits a pleasant chinking sound underfoot adding to the aural delights.

Waves of an entirely different type were a big part of Captain James Wall's life when he commanded sailing ships. In retirement he lived on the corner of Centennial Glen and

Shingley Roads and was a member of the Blackheath Group of the Sights Reserve Trust from the 1920s up until 1935. The area we now descended into was named after the good captain – Walls Ledge.

Dropping down off the plateau gave some protection from the wind and the track now runs along a ledge of claystone sandwiched between the sandstone layers. Initially the cliff face above us is dark weathered stone patterned with protrusions of ironstone; magnificent views into the Kanimbla Valley bathed in morning sunlight are on offer. Presently the cliff changes to a smooth vertical wall of orange, red and golden hues; here we meet a couple of rock climbers preparing to scale the heights.

Under a wide rock overhang warmed by the sun Libby decides it would be prudent to pause for an early morning tea before we enter the more shaded area deeper in the valley. While at this spot two more rock climbers paused to talk. They explained that many of the climbers who use this popular area are involved in a volunteer programme to repair the walking track; each person spends four days per year working on the track using material supplied and delivered to site by Blue Mountains City Council. Great to see another example of something being put back into the community.

Moving on we reach a shady fern-filled dell where water drops from the cliff edge above, splashing into a mossy rectangular pool; this is Cleopatra's Bath. Alas Cleo was nowhere to be seen, perchance seeking out Mark Antony or perhaps attempting to charm an asp.

We then follow the rather steep steps cut into the rock face, which lead down to Centennial Glen Creek. A short track to the right takes us to The Grotto, a beautiful enclosed, canyon-like area into which the creek plunges via a narrow waterfall; the lilting water music is intensified as it echoes from this rocky amphitheatre and mingles with Victoria's melodious laughter which requires little amplification. Continuing downstream we descend the steps beside Slippery Dip

Waterfall. This feature is a serpentine rounded channel cut into the steep rock scarp by the action of the creek. Water rushing down this furrow was being whipped up by the wind and sprayed across the smooth water and foot worn steps making the descent a little hazardous and the use of the icy metal handrail essential.

Near the bottom of the falls we look up to the majestic cliffs near Walls Ledge and beyond. After crossing the creek we make our way along Colliers Causeway which runs below the escarpment that borders the western side of Blackheath. This is a more open, drier area and the talus slope drops away on our left to the valley floor. At a large rock overhang the native bees have taken up residence. Intricate honeycomb stalactites hang from the ceiling creating a fascinating golden sculpture. There are no bees visible at the site - probably far too sensible to be out in this wind.

The escarpment above us is spectacular with occasional huge slabs of sandstone protruding over the cliff edge and long vertical rifts indicating the relentless ongoing formative forces in play in these mountains. The sheer walls are layered in colours of orange, honey, white and gold interspersed with bands of vegetation. Vertical dark water stains on the sandstone offset these horizontal elements in the cliff face.

The track moves closer to the cliff and the environment becomes more moist. Water seeping from the heathlands above plummets in silver droplets to the trackline; behind the dripline large shawls of grass dotted with the red blossom of the *Epacris reclinata* shroud the embankments. A few Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea sp*) stand at the base of the cliff, their scapes thrusting skywards above skirts of long narrow cascading leaves. Large cushions of moss sit in sheltered areas beside the track. An oriental touch is added to the scene by a long horizontal branch of a Tea-tree (*Leptospermum sp*), copiously furnished with small white flowers, reaching across the track.

We enter a more sheltered area where a small waterfall cascades onto a sloping rock face embellished with small ferns and spongelike clumps of moss, near its base a water trough has been carved into the rock; we are now at the base of Porters Pass.

Looking up into this gully is one of those classic views of walking tracks in the valleys of the Blue Mountains. Sandstone blocks form a series of steps winding through the leaf litter and disappearing between two large moss-shrouded rock faces, the serpentine roots of an ancient tree cling tightly to the sides of the large rock upon which it sits before diving into the soil seeking nourishment and support. Ferns, mosses and lichens thrive in this sheltered environment while the golden blooms of a lone Sunshine Wattle (*Acacia terminalis*) glow in the sunlight filtering through the overarching trees.

Higher up the gully there is a large rock overhang beside the creek crossing; perhaps this is the cave Porter named Alice Louisa Cave after his daughter, however there is some conjecture that cave is further along the gully. We now climb through more open country and divert to a series of pagoda-like rock formations, one of which is named Lamberts Lookout as a retirement gesture to Lambert Vandenburg who was a signwriter for the BMCC until 1987. We retire to this lofty parapet for lunch while luxuriating in the warming sun and taking in the expansive views. There is a pleasantly bucolic scene in the valley, smoke rising from farmhouse chimneys, cows grazing and horses being trained; all viewed in miniature from our high vantage point.

We spent some time lazing here. Geoff Kelly was regally reposed having found a throne-like nook atop the rock while Allan Cupitt exhibited extreme valour, perhaps bravado, by talking of tea cosies and Rosemary's woollen beanie with pompom in the same sentence!

We reluctantly leave this idyllic spot and make our way up to the trackhead at Burton Street. Along the way we encounter a trifecta of Geebungs; Broad-leaf Geebung (*Persoonia*

levis), Narrow-leaf Geebung (*P. linearis*) and Prostrate Geebung (*P. chamaepitys*). We then stroll along Cecil Road and turn into Kanimbla Road passing the site of Timothy Porter's little patch of paradise, skirt around the school grounds and emerge once more onto open heath.

The well-worn track through the Recreation Reserve leads us down the hill to Fort Rock (formerly known as Barn Rock). Skirting this prominence we drop down to a rock shelf at the head of a gully. The track descends quite steeply into this gully and we pass a cliff face where the sandstone is blotched with white rosin and studded with rock anchors indicating its popularity as a climbing site. The track here is bordered by lush banks of Pouched Coral Fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*), as were most of the sheltered sections of track on this walk.

Soon we reach Centennial Falls and walk behind the silver veil of water which drops from a large cleft in the cliff face above. As we move past the falls the gully opens up and larger trees tower skyward. We pass more evidence of rock climbing; climbing poles and coded letters and numbers low on the rock face. We pass behind a trickle of water dropping from the cliffline and peppering a bed of pebbles beside the track. Presently we arrive at the track which conveys us back up through the encroaching heath to the car park.

All in the group agreed this was a magnificent walk. The variety of environs ranging through expansive views, secluded grottoes, majestic cliffs, cascades and waterfalls, limpid pools and windswept heath make this one of the most appealing walks in the mountains. To experience it on a clear sunny day tempered with a bracing breeze such as we enjoyed today was simply magical.

Footnote: Much of the historical detail and the sources of names for the various features included here were gleaned from two excellent publications - Upper Blue Mountains Geographical Encyclopaedia by Brian Fox and Centennial Glen and Porters Pass Blackheath, Blue Mountains by Keith Painter.

OUR JULY WALK

Friday 16th July 2010

**Cascades and Waterfalls, Distant Views,
Majestic Cliffs and Shady Forest**

**Valley of the Waters, National Pass, Slacks
Stairs, Wentworth Pass, Valley of the
Waters.**

The group last walked the National Pass and Valley of the Waters section of this circuit in February 2008. The Slacks Stairs and Wentworth Pass section will be a new venture for the Group. We will be **descending** Slacks Stairs which consist of a series of nine very steep steel ladders/stairs, most having handrails and safety cages, from the National Pass to the valley floor. (Gloves may be an idea for use on the icy handrails.) Then we will follow Wentworth Pass back to the Valley of the Waters. This is rated as a hard walk but as it is only around 5km we will be able to do it at a fairly relaxed pace. There is a descent and thus an ascent of 400 vertical metres around this circuit.

Meet at the Conservation Hut Car Park at the end of Fletcher Street in Wentworth Falls at 9.00am or 8.00am at Merry Garth.

Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea and plenty of water.

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.

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 20th August 2010 – The full length of Bowens Creek Road – Bilpin to Mt Irvine

Note: As this walk will require a long car shuffle from Mt Irvine to Bilpin, early notification of your attendance will be essential and the use of additional cars may be required

Friday 17th September 2010 – Six Foot Track - last section from Kiora Hill to Jenolan Caves. Allan Cupitt, who works as a part time guide

at the caves, has offered to lead our group on a cave inspection following the walk; an entrance fee, probably discounted, will apply - more details later. Allan and Jeanie have kindly invited us to return to their property at Bowenfels after the walk for afternoon tea and/or a BYO barbecue depending on our finishing time at the caves.

Friday 15th October 2010 – The Blue Gum Forest. A chance to see how this iconic area of the mountains has recovered from the November 2006 fires.

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.

9th July 2010 at Gregson Park (Opposite Windyridge)

13th August 2010 at Gregson Park (Opposite Windyridge)

10th September 2010 at Sloan Reserve

Contact Libby or Beth Raines on 4756 2121 for details

