
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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THE TESSELLATED OUR 20th ANNIVERSARY MAY WALK

THE TESSELLATED PAVEMENTS at Mt IRVINE

Friday 21st May 2010

“Those who attended our first walk, held 17/5/’90, were delighted with the Tessellated Pavements, in spite of the very overcast conditions on the day. We were wonderfully pleased with the response to this walk in which seventeen participated, and were keen to have a second walk soon.”

Quoted above, in full, is the report covering the first walk undertaken by the group twenty years ago; marginally less verbose than my more recent efforts.

This walk was in response to a circular which I thought would elicit general curiosity, but be of particular interest to some of our now ‘armchair walkers’ who were participants in that first walk or other early ventures; it is reproduced below.

“PROPOSED BUSHWALKING GROUP FOR MT WILSON/MT IRVINE

Some residents have expressed an interest in a walking group, which could undertake easy walks in this lovely district every month or two months. There are many interesting and



Winter in the Bush

PAVEMENTS

delightful places within reach of an hour’s or 90 minutes walk. These walks need not be too strenuous but will provide an opportunity to enjoy our bushland and widen our knowledge of it at the same time. It offers, also, a basis for pleasant companionship among those of diverse interests.

Possible venues for these walks could be –

- The Tessellated Pavements at Mt Irvine – a 90 minute walk;
- Boronia Point, below Farrer Rd, Mt Wilson – a shorter walk;
- The Bogey Holes, off the Five Mile, near Ryan’s Corner – an hour’s walk.

A Picnic Lunch could be taken, if desired, and the Billy could be boiled in the Autumn, Winter, and early Spring.

This proposal is supported by the Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine C.W.A., and an established and knowledgeable resident, Mrs Libby Raines.

The first walk proposed is for Thursday 17 May, 1990 or the following Thursday to the Tessellated Pavements (Mt Irvine).

If you would like to join this walk, or would like to join in future walks, could you contact either Mrs Libby Raines (56 2121) or Mrs Mary Reynolds (56 2006).”

Those who attended that first walk were: Libby Raines (and her dog Twinkle), Mary and Ellis Reynolds (and their dog Clarke-Maxwell), Helen and Ron Naylor, Elly Gunn, Sue and Bruce Gailey, Vera Strano, Caterina Calagiuri, Joan Rogers, Helen Ghent, Liz Harding, Fae and Cedric Boulton, Trudi Spranger and John Ward.

We move on twenty years now and a group of walkers has gathered in Cathedral Reserve where a vehicle rationalisation is organised for the drive to the Mt Irvine starting point. Same starting point, same destination, different group of walkers - except for one; Libby is once again leading a group to retrace that first walk to the Tessellated Pavements.

One of our original walkers, Helen Naylor, was waiting near the gate at the end of Mt Irvine Road to greet us and wave us on; her daughter Robyn and Libby's daughter Beth were to catch up with us down the track. Their arrival brought the number of walkers to twenty-two. (Helen Naylor's father, Harold Morley, was one of the three original young settlers in Mt Irvine who took up land holdings in 1897; Helen still lives on part of that original selection.)

As we proceeded along the fire trail the view to our left was dominated by a sloping grassy field bordered by a light green line of conical conifers punctuated occasionally by the scarlet autumn leaves of deciduous exotics; an impressive sight. Soon we divert to the right and the track leads us through open woodland consisting mainly of Smooth-barked Apple (*Angophora costata*), Brown Barrels (*Eucalyptus fastigata*) and Hard-leaved Scribbly Gums (*Eucalyptus sclerophylla*). The gully to the left of this section of ridge carries Morley Creek, named after Helen's father.

The ubiquitous Mountain Devils (*Lambertia formosa*) are displaying a few bright red flowers but more interesting are the tiny green demonic faces peering out from among the foliage. The other distinctive visage of the bush, that of the Big Bad Banksia Man, also surveys the scene from among the branches of the Old Man Banksia (*Banksia serrata*).

The track dips into a sheltered dale where we weave past moss crusted rocks and the smooth yet knobbly trunks of Smooth-barked Apples, their tactile bark coloured grey and pink and cream and orange. Soon we are at the intriguing rock face where thin wafers of sandstone sit obliquely under a high ledge over which a shawl of Rock Felt-fern (*Pyrrosia rupestris*) drapes. A cavity in the ceiling of the overhang once held a lyrebird nest, a tangle of sticks and twigs; it is no longer there, no trace at all. It was still in place when we last visited in 2007 and had been there at least since 1990 when a photograph was taken on that initial walk; alas it is no more.

We diverged to a vantage point on the west of the ridge to take in the views back to Mt Wilson; a blush of autumn colour atop a rise. Also on view below was the steep-sided gorge through which the Wollangambe takes a swing to the west before reverting to its more northerly course. We then moved to an east-facing eyrie with views down the course of Bowens Creek and across to the cleared pastures on Mt Tootie and Little Mt Tootie.

As we continued along the ridge the drone of an approaching Hercules could be heard; it reached a crescendo as it passed overhead. Quite decent, I thought, of the RAAF to put on a fly-past for our twentieth anniversary.

Following the track along the ridge we passed many well-scribbled Scribbly Gums, the essence of which David Campbell captures in his so named 1979 verse:

*White parchment trees
Recording
The brief lives of insects*

*An automatic writing
Telling all and nothing*

Soon we emerge onto the Tessellated Pavements with their intriguing geometric patterns left by Mother Nature and the carved female figure and sharpening grooves left by the original inhabitants of the region.

This is a wonderful area to explore; the large rock shelf has been compartmentalised by low

growing shrubs struggling to survive in the extremely shallow soils deposited on the rock. Some areas are devoid of tessellations while others have large domes rising out of the shelf, on the Wollangambe side of the pavement there are ridged hump formations somewhat like those at the Mt Irvine Ramparts.

We had lunch here taking in the views down the twin gorges of the Wollangambe River and Bowens Creek, which merge before meeting the Colo River. The sudden rumble of thunder shook us from our torpor as storm clouds billowed to our north; one such cloud had a huge roughly cubic hole in its side, an amazing sight. Some group photos were taken to record the occasion and we set off to retrace our steps to Mt Irvine and then to the Mt Wilson Village Hall for the celebratory afternoon tea.

Forty-seven people attended the hall. Former members present were Marie Glass and Diana & Tom Nelson of Wentworth Falls, Marjorie Young of Katoomba, Rosemary Ringhoff of Hazelbrook, Robyn and Kevin Burns of Blackheath and Alison Heap who travelled from her property at Mullaley near Coonabarabran. Apologies were received from many others. Several of our 'armchair walkers' also attended: Elaine Turnidge, Mary and Ellis Reynolds, Florence Smart, Arthur Delbridge, Fay Hargraves, Helen Naylor and Grace Weaver.

As photographs covering the activities of the group over the last twenty years were projected in rotation on the big screen several short speeches were made. Ellis Reynolds spoke of his recollections of the first walk undertaken by the group, Mary Reynolds spoke on the concept of forming of the group, Elaine Turnidge related her experiences as an ex-walker - now 'armchair walker'. Other current members, Rosemary Knott, Pauline Michell, Fay Hargraves and Allan Cupitt spoke off the cuff regarding their appreciation of what the group had delivered to individuals and to the community over the years.

The walk today was number 262 which means of course that Libby has baked at least that

many of her delicious bushwalking cakes, probably closer to 300 with multiples for large groups. With so many walks under her belt I thought it would be interesting to do a quick calculation – over the years, and including the reconnaissance walks she does to check track conditions, suss out new walks, etc Libby would have walked approximately 5,500kms on walks with and for the group. That's from Sydney to Darwin and back to Brisbane – some of those kilometres incidentally were spent walking backwards as, typical of Libby, she supported dear departed Ern Morgan when he was determined not to give up walking with the group.

Now Libby, the lady to whom we owe so much, spoke. She spoke passionately of the group which means so much to her, of its formation, of its history and of the many explorations over the last twenty years; a precis follows.

After welcoming past and present walkers and especially those who accompanied her on that first walk, Mary & Ellis Reynolds and Helen Naylor, Libby quoted from her notes for the May 1992 walk, the first walk attended by Arthur Delbridge:

“A wet misty mountain day – a lovely walk down to the Wollangambe River, lunch in McConachie's Cave above the river which was as clear as crystal. We lit a campfire and drank hot tea! – A great day!”

Libby then ran through the many apologies received; Gloria and Ron Harris (Ron is in hospital and quite frail), Heather Herbert from Canberra, John Mason from the North Coast, Heather and Norm Cornellan (Norm often carried the billy and helped with the fire on those early walks), Helen Robbins from Nambucca Heads, Margaret Murdoch who was leading her own group today, Ellen Freemantle who is travelling in north western Australia. Regular walker Fred Roberts and Fay sent their regards (Fay is recovering from a foot operation) and an unexpected work commitment prevented Alex Halliday from attending (work can be so inconvenient at times).

Two of the original walkers, Sue and Bruce Gailey wrote from their home in South West Rocks: "If we had wings as of angels we would be with you, but we don't travel far these days. However the invitation has sparked memories of the special times bushwalking – remembering the so many good friends and great places, discovering the mountains together."

Libby then went on: "In 1990 I was thinking of taking some of the local community on walks as often people would ask me where were the Pavements or the Bogey Holes. Mary came up to me one evening, in this hall, and said she was thinking the same thing, so we wrote to members of the two villages..."

(That circular is reproduced above.)

Libby continued: "Seventeen set off to the Pavements on that first walk little knowing what a very special and wonderful activity it would become, involving over 400 people and exploring together this beautiful bushland which surrounds us.

Thank you Mary, for your support and enthusiasm over the years, it has been a great venture together. Neither of us could have done it alone.

Memories of past walks, great friendships, beautiful places, come flooding back when I think back over the years. The Pavements with its views of endless tree-clad ranges and deep twisty gorges - Boronia Point with its awesome cliffs and the winding river far below - the majesty of the Blue Gum Forest with its great white-trunked trees glowing in the soft light - the waterworn cliffs and beauty of the Grand Canyon - the Valley of the Waters with its dripping ferns and wet mossy rocks.

The adventures with lilo and wetsuit exploring the Wollangambe – Deep Pass with its hidden surprises – Gooch's Crater and Kanangra Walls, I could go on and on.

More recently the fabulous view from the lookout on the Pipeline Track above the Wolgan River – surrounded by a beautiful natural garden of wildflowers and sharing the

bush walking cake with a young French tourist on the top of the rocks at the Ruined castle – what a glorious place for lunch!

All these beautiful places and many more are intertwined with the people who were there too, people from all walks of life, sharing the challenge of the walk and enjoying the bush which surrounded them.

All of you have shared some of those wonderful places and we have trodden the paths together. We think fondly too of those dear friends who are no longer with us but also shared these experiences.

It has been great to relive some of the walks through the photos which Helen has so carefully put together. Thank you all for your support and friendship over the years and we look forward to many more great walks and beautiful places.

Often people ask me which is my favourite walk. I am sorry but I cannot answer that – all the walks are special in different ways. Our old friend Hans used to say: '**It is the being there that I love**' and I agree with him."

Libby and Mary then cut the 20th Anniversary cake, which was decorated with a photographic montage, in the shape of the figure twenty, of the faces of those who have belonged to the group over the years and who have made it what it is today. A sumptuous afternoon tea was then enjoyed by all.

I took the liberty, on behalf of the group, and with apologies to all fair dinkum poets - living or dead, to pen an ode to Libby which was read to wind up proceedings at the afternoon tea. It has been suggested I should include it in this newsletter and it is probably an appropriate way to end the 20th Anniversary report.

John C

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ODE TO LIBBY (John Cardy – May 2010)

In May nineteen ninety - an idea came to mind
Which Libby and Mary were to push
For walks each month – for those inclined
To don boots – explore the bush

Seventeen gathered – with dogs and a billy
For that initial walk had been slated
Skies were cloudy – the wind was chilly
But they reached the Pavements Tessellated

And so it began – this magnificent obsession
The pattern would hardly vary
Each month saw Libby - lead a happy procession
The event written up by Mary

Libby has led us – through forests and heaths
Into canyons as cold as the fridge
Had us swinging from ropes – lookout beneath!
Through valley, on mountain, along ridge

In Blue Gum Forest – we've seen Goannas scowl
Above the Butterbox – watched Eagles soar
We've seen Swimming Snakes – a Powerful Owl
Heard Bellbirds tinkle – wild rivers roar

On one winter morn – as we climbed Mount Bindo
Footprints were all that we left
On the pristine expanses – of freshly laid snow
Libby's planning is so very deft

From modest beginnings – the group has grown
Now coming from far – and from near
Over twenty years – the seed has been sown
A love of the bush – to endear

Libby has taken us – some wondrous places
Our lives being enriched by so much
We have gained such a lot – met many new faces
She has such a wide reaching touch

Merry Garth – the place where she lives
The name means Blessed Enclosure
For everything that this lady gives
Blessed are all that know her

OUR JUNE WALK

Friday 18th June 2010

**Secluded Grottos, Extensive Heath,
Expansive Views - perhaps even a glimpse
of Cleopatra bathing**

**Centennial Glen and Porters Pass at
Blackheath**

Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

The group last undertook this walk in July 2004. This walk is a wonderful combination of open heath, shady gullies, waterfalls, precipitous cliffs and waterworn grottos. It is one of the oldest walking tracks in the Blue Mountains and is situated on the western side of Blackheath.

**Meet in the car park a short distance down
Centennial Glen Rd at Blackheath at
9.30am.**

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

Or meet at Merry Garth at 9.00am

Bring morning tea, lunch, 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 16th July 2010 – Valley of the Waters,
Slacks Stairs, Wentworth Pass at Wentworth
Falls

Friday 20th August 2010 – Bowens Creek
Road – Bilpin to Mt Irvine

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.**

**11th June 2010 at Gregson Park (Opposite
Windyridge)**

**9th July 2010 at Gregson Park (Opposite
Windyridge)**

**Contact Libby or Beth Raines on 4756 2121
for details**