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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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## A MOUNT WILSON

### OUR JANUARY WALK

NORTHERN FIRE TRAIL,  
DU FAURS ROCKS, RYANS  
CUTTING and the  
WYNDHAM ZIG ZAG at  
MOUNT WILSON

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2011

Leaping leeches! At last, a fine morning on the mountain.

Twenty walkers gathered at Merry Garth on this very pleasant morn where Libby ran through the agenda for the day, chosen from the several options she had up her sleeve to cover any contingency the weather may have presented.

So we plunged into the first of many different terrains we would encounter today; that magical patch of rainforest behind the properties which front onto Hillcrest and Shadforth Lanes. Libby soon led us off the track toward the boundary of Linden where an old well is situated. This is one of three wells sunk in the 1920s, the others being on the Wynstay property; one opposite Merry Garth and the other adjacent to the Anniversary Walk on the northern boundary of Wynstay. Libby explained the well we were at filled after extended rain periods and fed a small spring near the walking track, as was the case recently. In this area are two examples of the Possumwood (*Quintinia sieberi*) a corky



## RAMBLE

barked tree whose seeds often germinate on the trunks of tree ferns, the roots then descending the fibrous trunk to reach the soil, their growth then accelerates and the host tree fern eventually dies. The examples here were a mature tree firmly clasping a deceased tree fern trunk and a young tree high on the trunk of another doomed tree fern.

We continue along the edge of the rainforest past huge Banksias (*Banksia integrifolia* var. *compar*), a form of the

Coastal Banksia which grows only in scattered areas of the Blue Mountains; a real eye-opener for those who are used to seeing only stunted small to medium sized Banksias in more exposed areas. Soon the clucking and scratching of hens can be heard as we approach the fowl yard at Jamine; the hens all eye us as we pass with that look of utter disdain that only a contented chook can deliver.

Presently we pause on a recently laid bed of stones forming a carriageway, a refuge from the long moist grass. Here was an opportunity for the first major leech alert, although I did notice several instances earlier of the slippery little suckers being flicked off boots socks and bare legs. Here Libby showed us a 'Cicada Stick' she had found, a small branchlet on which the bark had been pierced and lifted slightly in many places. The tiny 'pouches' so formed in the live bark are where the cicada

Summer in the Bush

lays its eggs and there they stay until the branchlet dies and falls to the ground. The larvae hatch and then live underground for up to seven years until the nymphal form climbs nearby tree trunks and that magical process commences of the cicada breaking from the shell and pumping up what start as crumpled membranes to form those delicate gossamer wings. What a delight these creatures are to the Australian bush with their rhythmic song and the hours of entertainment they provide as children attempt to catch one of each variety; Yellow Mondays, Green Grocers, the allusive Black Princes, etc. Kids do still indulge in that quintessential Australian childhood pursuit, don't they? Or has the omnipresent flickering blue screen supplanted even that pleasure? (Incidentally, in complete and utter contrast to the human species, female cicadas are silent, only the males produce that song of the bush.)

We now make our way along the line of Shadforth Lane past the beautiful lake area of the grounds of Bisley; some in the group indicated they could quite easily settle here for the day. Libby paused to give a short history of the development of land in this area, originally cleared apparently to accommodate horses. The keeper of the horses however deemed it totally unsuitable and the land was eventually divided and sold. Shows that investing your hard-earned cash in horses is not only risky at the racetrack.

We continue along these picturesque lanes and drop down toward the Cathedral Reserve. Below the tree cover adjacent to the reserve a couple of Small Tongue Orchids (*Cryptostylis leptochila*) are noted. The dark-coloured stem of this rather unusual orchid rises from a base of ovate leaves lying flat on the ground, the middle petal, or labellum, is deep red and narrow; it curves upward and back, a very curious flower indeed. We pause for morning tea near a regeneration area in the reserve; some in the group feel this is quite appropriate.

Freshly primed we set off, by no means half-cocked, along the Northern Fire Trail. Shortly we had a scene in our sights which bombarded our senses – a large swathe of Trigger Plants

decorated the slope above the fire trail. These were the Grass-leaf Trigger Plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*) which hold their flowers aloft on stalks up to 40 centimetres tall. Each flower carries a tiny cocked hammer which, when triggered by a visiting insect, swings over to hit the insect thus transferring pollen; nature is truly a wondrous thing.

The fire trail takes us mainly through open forest past magnificent trees such as the Yellow Gum or Mountain Grey Gum (*Eucalyptus cypellocarpa*) with its greyish-white bark. We also pass a couple of stands of the beautiful Blue Mountains Ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*) with their smooth upper trunks glowing white in the sun and long ribbons of discarded bark streaming out from the sock of rough bark at their base. In more sheltered spots there are wonderful examples of the Cedar Wattle (*Acacia elata*). To the right there are views over the line of Serendipity Canyon, across the course of the Wollangambe to the seemingly never-ending ridges beyond; a stunning vista.

We pass the junctions of the exit track from the first section of canyon and the track down to the Wollangambe, both now carrying more detailed warning signs. As we drop down into a small gully the pleasant sound of running water is heard as a small stream passes under the trail on its way to the Pheasants Cave. Here there is an abundance of Black Wattle (*Callicoma serratifolia*) a tree variety with which Ray Nesci has had spectacular success as an unlikely Bonsai subject.

Soon we are at Du Faurs Rocks Road and divert to the lookout to take in not only the distant views but also the intriguing structure of the rocks themselves and the groups of sharpening grooves which are far more prominent sitting in pools of water. We then walk via the Chinamans Hat formation past many more groups of sharpening grooves and climb up to the Western Fire Trail.

We had been treated to many groups of Trigger Plants along the trail but I noted a small group in this area which was particularly beautiful. Nestled among the leaf litter below

the many heads of bright pink flowers were the tiny mauve flowers of the Slender Violet (*Hybanthus monopetalus*). The setting was complemented by a single brilliant buttercup yellow flower of a Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) sitting atop its stem in the centre; an exquisite display by Mother Nature.

Continuing along the fire trail we descend the Sunday Walk Spur and with the sun now beating on our backs we reach Ryans Cutting. Rather than walk along the road we follow a rudimentary parallel track through the bush to the bottom of the Zig Zag. It never fails to amaze how the rugged beauty of the dry sclerophyll woodland suddenly gives way to the lush moist rainforest at this point.

We then set off to follow the line of the original zig zag formation to climb this hill; the Wyndam Zig Zag.

Edward Wyndham, of the winemaking family in the Hunter Valley, having been appointed as a temporary surveyor was given the task of sub-dividing land at Mt Wilson. To aid in this project in 1868 he arranged for the zig zag construction. To obtain suitable road making material the basalt quarry on the north side of the existing zig zag was opened and its site indicates where the sharp bend in the Wyndham Zig Zag was located. As we walked this route it was possible to identify sections of the road bench and embankments; excavated on the high side and built-up with basalt blocks from the quarry on the low side. A visit to the quarry site illustrates the hard work that went into providing access to this area.

We concluded this Mt Wilson Ramble of about 14km with a stroll along Queens Avenue, Waterfall Road and Galwey Lane back to Merry Garth where we partook of the usual after walk cuppa in the gardens; a sublime way to end a great day.

PS. On the Sunday following the walk I noticed a large leech standing erect surveying the scenery from our garage floor at West Pennant Hills; hope it enjoyed the trip from Mt Wilson, its stay was very short.

John C

As Helen and I will be away with the penguins in Antarctica (a change from being away with the fairies) for almost all of February no newsletter will be distributed in March. Details of walk locations and meeting times for both the February and March walks are therefore given below.

## OUR FEBRUARY WALK

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2011

**Striking Vistas, Ferny Glens, Gentle Waterfalls and Spectacular Canyons**

**The Grand Canyon and Neates Glen at Blackheath**

This walk incidentally will take place one day after the one hundred and fourth anniversary of the official opening of this classic Blue Mountains walking track on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 1907. The main circuit is 5.5 kilometres with a descent and subsequent ascent of about 350 metres. There is a rather steep climb in fairly open country from Neates Glen back to Evans Lookout Road to finish this walk. Depending on track and weather conditions diversions may be made to Beauchamp Falls and into a narrow canyon on Greaves Creek.

**Meet at Neates Glen Car Park in Evans Lookout Road, Blackheath at 9.30am or at Merry Garth at 8.30am.**

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

**Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 (after 7pm).**

## OUR MARCH WALK

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2011

**Stunning Pagodas, A Marshy Lagoon, Huge Rock Overhangs and perhaps, an optional Rope Assisted Descent of a Sloping Rock Face**

**Goochs Crater on the Newnes Plateau**

This spectacular crater formation is situated north of the upper reaches of the Wollangambe River. Rocky crags overlook the enclosed lagoon; an intriguing place to visit.

Meet at the Zig Zag Railway at Clarence at 9.30 am or at Merry Garth at 8.45 am.

As a vehicle rationalisation will take place at Clarence notification of your attendance is essential, the earlier the better. Any 4WD vehicles that can be provided for the trip onto the plateau would be most appreciated.

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 15<sup>th</sup> April 2011 – To be announced

### **MEMBER NEWS**

Several members contacted Libby just prior to our Christmas walk and asked that their best wishes be passed on to you all. Lack of space prevented their inclusion in the January newsletter so here they are, better late than never.

Fred Roberts rang to pass on his and Fay's best wishes as did John Meade and Jan Northam; Jan had intended coming on the Christmas walk but felt a bit below par on the day. Jan Newman also sent a note expressing best wishes to everyone.

Jenny Rich wrote explaining that although the problem she had with her foot is much improved she has been advised not to walk long distances or on steep grades. Jenny has sold her house in Wentworth Falls and will be moving to North Nowra during the year. She wrote, in part: "I really enjoyed the walks I did with the Mount Wilson Bush Walking Group. Thankyou for having me and I wish you and the members of the group all the best for the future". We in turn wish you all the best Jenny, that your move south is a great success and exceeds your expectations.

### **VERY SPECIAL MEMBER NEWS**

Our dear friend Mary Reynolds has been recognised in the Australia Day Honours List.

As most of you would be aware, Mary and Libby were responsible for the formation of this walking group almost twenty-one years ago in May 1990. For many years Mary walked with the group, wrote umpteen walk reports and produced the newsletter.

Yet Mary's activities in supporting this group are just a very small part of her involvement in the Mt Wilson community; she has always been one of the first to offer assistance in any activity when the need arose.

Mary's major contribution however, one which will leave a legacy long into the future, is her involvement in the local historical society. The amount of time and effort Mary has contributed to the establishment and smooth running of the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society Inc and the Turkish Bath Museum would overwhelm we mere mortals. The research Mary has undertaken into the history of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine has been formidable; this work has been, and will continue well into the future to be, of immense value to anyone seeking information relating to Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine.

The citation for the OAM reads: "Service to the community through a range of historical, environmental and charitable organisations".

Our heartiest congratulations to you Mary!

### **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.**

**11<sup>th</sup> February 2011 at Sloan Reserve**

**11<sup>th</sup> March 2011 at Wynne Reserve**

**8<sup>th</sup> April 2011 at Wynne Reserve**

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