
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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LOCKLEY PYLON NORTH OF LEURA

TOPIC

OUR NOVEMBER WALK

LOCKLEY PYLON off the
Mt HAY ROAD at LEURA

Friday 16th November 2012

The fog comes on little cat feet

It sits looking

over harbour and city

on silent haunches

and then moves on

So wrote American poet Carl
Sandburg in 1916.

It was obviously a much larger moggy who brought this fog and slumped on its silent backside atop Lockley Pylon; it did not move on.

Fifteen walkers gathered at Leura below overcast skies, the fine misty rain that appeared to be floating in the air rather than falling from the clouds provided a refreshing touch to our faces. We welcomed Helen Freeman and Jan Northam back into the fold; both have not been able to join us for some time. We also welcomed back Peter and Mick Wholohan who have returned from their extended road trip to Western Australia. Libby used her magic formula to have us all allocated a seat in a reduced number of vehicles and we set off on the drive of about ten kilometres to the trackhead; there were



Summer in the Bush

encouraging indications along the way that the clouds may lift and even break to some extent.

As we walked in single file along the narrow track there were long views down the gully which carries Fortress Creek and also across to the adjacent Fortress Ridge, while off to the east prominent rock outcrops were clearly visible. The distant cliff faces and ridges however were shrouded in fog though there were signs of it beginning to lift out of the valley. The vegetation had a renewed glow about it following the recent welcome

rains; the foliage, still moist, glistened in the subdued light.

Approaching and passing below The Pinnacles we encountered the first of what proved to be an almost continuous display of wildflowers. Festooned along an embankment above the track were clusters of the delicate pink flowers of the Dog Rose (*Bauera rubioides*) bowing their heads lower than normal due to the weight of the clinging moisture. The small crinkled blue petals of the Blue Damperia (*Damperia stricta*) decorated the trackside and the fluffy balls forming the flower heads of the Pink Kunzea (*Kunzea capitata*) lit up the scene. The bright yellow globular flowers of the Broad-leaf Drumstick (*Isopogon anemonifolius*) provided a striking contrast.

The rocky crags of The Pinnacles loomed above us then faded into the mist behind as we crossed a sandy saddle where the Blue

Mountains Mallee Ash (*Eucalyptus stricta*) dominated, their multiple stems holding aloft crowns of narrow-leaved foliage. As is often the case there were many Dwarf She Oaks (*Allocasuarina nana*) growing in the vicinity of the Mallee Ash. The bright red stigma of the female flowers form tiny starbursts at the bases of stems awaiting the pollen released by the light-brown male flower spikes on the ends of stems of nearby trees. Also present here are several examples of the Pink Spider-flower (*Grevillea sericea*) carrying just a few, umm, spidery light pink flowers. (Well how else would you describe them?)

We moved onto the more wooded slopes of Mt Stead where there were many gnarled and weather-beaten Hard-leaved Scribbly Gums (*Eucalyptus sclerophylla*); the tortured fire-scarred trunks added a sculptural element to this open woodland. There were many Mountain Devils (*Lambertia formosa*) scattered through the understorey displaying their clusters of brilliant red tubular flowers of this season along with devilish little horned seed pods from previous years. Flannel Flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*) added a softening touch with their green-tinged white flannel-like bracts surrounding their central flower head. The troops were getting a little restless regarding the absence of a morning tea stop to this point but Libby had that in hand, she soon diverted onto a rocky outcrop where we paused to refuel.

Usually from this elevated spot there are panoramic vistas on show; today the views were very much shortened by the fog. This restriction however concentrated the mind on that which was closer at hand. The view down onto the span of vegetation, punctuated by pillars of rock as it disappeared into the mist, provided a pleasing prospect. The form of the rock outcrop itself was fascinating; convoluted ironstone protrusions formed contorted pipes and undulating ledges while shallow water basins decorated horizontal surfaces. Crowning this rock outcrop was a formation like a rolling wave; a petrified breaker frozen in time. Within the rugged beauty of the rock outcrop a tiny plant with delicate four-petalled

white flowers was surviving in almost no soil. The unfortunately named Mitre Weed (*Mitrasacme polymorpha*), a small herb more usually found growing in sandy soils or on swampy ground, appeared quite at home in this more severe environment.

Despite what appeared as an earlier promise of the fog perhaps lifting the weather now closed in; light rain began falling and visibility became further reduced, limited perhaps to only about forty or fifty metres. As we continued along the track I was intrigued by the apparent rise in volume of the sound of now unseen boots crunching on the gravel path and the voices of invisible walkers filtering back through the murk. Fortuitously there is a sign at the point where the track diverts to the top of Lockley Pylon for now the fog was even thicker. We climbed up the flank of the pylon with only the first five or so walkers in front visible. Then out of the gloom the cairn which marks the summit came into view; we were atop Lockley Pylon.

In the notice for this walk I stated there would be spectacular 360° views and indeed there were. Yes, I'll admit, it was 360° of a wall of white but 'spectacular' is in the eye of the beholder. I'd wager a surreal scene such as this, suitably promoted, would draw thousands to any museum of contemporary art.

Unnoticed when we all filed closely past the cairn to take in the 'view' was a small skink stretched out on a rock; Bob Bearup I think was the first to spot it. Considering its head was paler than the rest of its body and that it had slender elongated toes on its rear feet I think it was probably a Cunninghams Skink (*Egernia cunninghami*). It remained lying there for quite some time despite being closely inspected by the group.

Having had our fill of the 'wall of white' it was time to partake of lunch in this very atmospheric locale. Jan Northam found a nicely constructed seat on the side of the cairn and sat regally overlooking the rest of the group. Bob Bearup and John Meade made very good impersonations of Fred Flintstone and Barney Rubble earnestly rearranging

rocks to construct suitable seating at the base of the cairn. Then to add to this fanciful scene Libby emerged from the mist to dispense portions of her delicious bushwalker cake; visions of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party flashed into my rather peculiar mind.

On a clear day we could look down from this elevated spot to the Blue Gum Forest. A committee formed to save that special place, along with several supporters, assembled among those giant Blue Gums on 15 November 1931 to negotiate with Clarrie Hungerford; he held a lease over part of the forest. Among the supporters present was John Gilmour Lockley, a keen conservationist. Lockley made a significant contribution toward the preservation of the forest by, among other things, publicising the cause.

He was a journalist with the Sydney Morning Herald who wrote articles on horticulture and nature under the name of 'Redgum' and wrote several books on gardening; he was also a councillor and Shire President in Ku-ring-gai. He was a personal friend of Henry Lawson and assisted with the publication of some of Lawson's poetry.

He was aged about seventy at the time of that meeting in the forest. Apparently on the way out of the gorge following the meeting Lockley commented on the prominent rock pylon, which subsequently bore his name, jutting above the cliff line. (It obviously was not a day like today.) There is also a walking track in Garigal National Park on Middle Harbour which carries his name. He was very highly thought of in bushwalking, conservation and gardening circles and was made an honorary member of the Sydney Bush Walkers for his help in the Blue Gum Forest campaign; two trees were planted by gardening enthusiasts at the Koala Park in his memory after his death in 1937. He was a modest man and when speaking of his achievements would say words along the lines of "Compared to others I have done little really, but the others have not got a pylon".

(An excellent account of the history of the preservation of the Blue Gum Forest is given

in Andy Macqueen's "Back from the Brink – Blue Gum Forest and the Grose Wilderness".)

Though it was hard to drag ourselves away from the enthralling scenery we eventually headed down from the summit having first ensured we had not left anyone engulfed in the fog.

With the enclosed conditions continuing to force one to focus on closer elements in the landscape the beauty and delicacy of the heath land wildflowers were perhaps more appreciated than normal. Certainly these conditions made the white flowers appear more brilliant while the other coloured blossoms took on a deeper hue. The tiny white flowers of the Coneseeds (*Conospermum sp*), having a lower lip with three minute lobes below a hooded upper lip, are carried in terminal clusters which were very conspicuous. Grey Tea-trees (*Leptospermum myrtifolium*) carried white five-petalled flowers with a light green central cup while the Heath Platysace (*Platysace ericoides*) carried a host of diminutive white flowers in tight terminal umbels. These and the white blossom of other species were manifest.

Closer to the ground, peeking out from the lower vegetation, the lilac flowers with yellow stamens of the Rush Lily or Vanilla Plant (*Sowerbaea juncea*) formed delicate globules atop slender stems. The tiny velvety bracts of the Lesser Flannel Flower (*Actinotus minor*) struggled for attention among the low foliage while one example of the cream tubular bell-shaped flowers of an Epacris (possibly *Epacris calvertiana*) was sighted. Spreading through the ground cover was the *Mirbelia rubiifolia* displaying abundant clusters of small pink pea-like flowers.

Though deprived of expansive views how privileged we were to have arrayed before us such a diverse floral display.

Soon we were back at the trackhead and even here Mother Nature was able to enhance the work of man. The moist tawny form of Mt Hay Road curved into the mist between the overarching trees; a splendid setting in which to enjoy the usual after walk cuppa in the

company of treasured bushwalking friends before heading home - if it is possible to find the way through the fog.

After experiencing Lockley Pylon on a day such as this, perhaps on a return journey the paraphrased words of Japanese poet Matsuo Basho (1644-94) when writing of Mount Fuji would be relevant.

How pleasant –

Just once *not* to see

Lockley Pylon through mist

John Cardy

OUR DECEMBER WALK & END OF YEAR / CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

**MONDAY MONDAY MONDAY
MONDAY MONDAY 17th December 2012**

Enclosed Rainforest, Open Woodland and Valley Views

Crab Creek Lookout at Mt Wilson

As previously stated we are moving the December walk to Monday as our usual third Friday falls very close to Christmas Day this year. This morning walk is just long enough to build an appetite for our end of year / Christmas luncheon to follow at Merry Garth (see details later). Feel the enchanting atmosphere of the rainforest, experience open woodland with an understorey of tree ferns and see vast valley views; just some of the features.

Meet at Merry Garth at 8.20am for an 8.30am start

Bring morning tea only and water on the walk. **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.**

END OF YEAR / CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Thanks once again to the generous hospitality of Libby, Keith and Beth the end of year luncheon will be held in the glorious grounds of Merry Garth. Ex-walkers, armchair walkers, family and friends are more than welcome.

Meet for lunch at 12.30 – 1.00pm.

The same format as last year will be used, that is Nibbles, Ham, Turkey, Dessert, Tea and Coffee will be provided from funds.

Please bring one item only from the following selection **to share**: Any salad type dish, savoury slices or sweet slices.

Please bring your own plates, cutlery, glasses and drinks.

To assist with catering please advise Helen Cardy as early as possible if you are coming and, to avoid over and/or under supply, which of the shared food you would prefer to bring.

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 18th January 2013 – Boronia Point or Mathies Track and the Old Mill (both at Mt Wilson) depending on weather

Friday 15th February 2013 – To be advised

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.

14th December 2012 at The Avenue – Ferny Corner (Meet at Sloan Reserve)

11th January 2013 at Ferny Corner

8th February 2013 at Ferny Corner

Contact Libby or Beth Raines on 4756 2121 for details