
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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October 2013

LITTLE ZIG ZAG AND BUSHRANGERS CAVE

TOPIC

OUR SEPTEMBER WALK

**LITTLE ZIG ZAG,
BUSHRANGERS CAVE,
RIENITS PASS & WILSONS
GLEN at MT VICTORIA**

Friday 20th September 2013

“A penny for your thoughts” is an oft-used throwaway line; six pennies, a mere pittance, had a profound effect on someone associated with the route we will follow today. Also touching this walk were a politician, escaped convicts, a cantankerous bureaucrat, a poet, an engineer and a carpenter; not necessarily listed in any order of merit.

We gathered in rather blustery chilly conditions at Mount Victoria station in order for Libby to lead the group to our starting point, thus ensuring everyone ended up at the correct end of the discontinuous Kanimbla Valley Road. I waited at the station for Bob Bearup, who was travelling on the Gladys Berejiklian Express from Sydney; Bob and I caught up with the group at the Bushrangers Cave, bringing the number of walkers today to thirteen.

This deep cave with an elongated diamond-shaped entrance is very impressive and well worth the rocky scramble up to inspect the interior. Evidence that this cave had been occupied was first brought to public attention



Spring in the Bush

in the late 1890s; at this time an old musket, bootmaker's last and other items were found. Also found in the cave was part of an 1822 Sydney newspaper containing the descriptions of four escaped prisoners. The existence of the cave was known much earlier than 1890 however; the 1879 Railway Guide of New South Wales speaks of the 'Little Zigzag or Cunimbla Pass' and states: "Half-way down this road are some remarkable fissures in the rocks, known as the Cunimbla Caves. These extend into the mountain for some

considerable depth, and should not be explored without a light or a guide." Though the cave became known as the Bushrangers Cave there is no evidence that it was ever actually occupied by bushrangers. (A blatant enticement for tourist? – Surely not!)

The sandstone walls of the cave, patterned with ironstone inclusions, are imposing, yet one of the most striking features is a thick seam of the purest of white sandstone – amazing. The view into the Kanimbla Valley, framed by the vertically elongated cave opening, is magnificent.

Continuing down the Little Zig Zag, constructed circa 1876 as a bridle track for a cost of about £200 we pause at one of the zigs (or was it a zag) for morning tea. Now well below the escarpment we are protected from the wind and the air is filled with birdsong. Beside the track tiny four-petalled terrestrial

orchids, mostly pale pink but some white, nod atop slender stems; possibly, not withstanding that some were white, these were Pink Fingers (*Caladenia carnea*).

The route of the Kanimbla Pass continues toward the valley but we follow a footpad which swings to the left and drops down into a little gully before contouring across the slope through open woodland; we are now on Rienits Pass.

Henry Rienits arrived at Mt Victoria Public School in September 1880 having last been employed at the Cooyal School near Mudgee. He soon locked horns with a cantankerous school inspector and resigned. Not for a minute was Henry going to let a bumptious bureaucrat beat him; he employed a local carpenter to build him a schoolhouse of his own. Situated in Montgomery Street he simply called it 'The School'. Henry became heavily involved in the community being a trustee for the reserves and serving on the Progress Association along with many other local organisations.

In 1911 he nominated as a candidate for the Blue Mountains Shire Council. A statement was issued that the nomination of Mr H G Rienits has been declared invalid, as the candidate is indebted to the Council. The debt was sixpence! One can imagine his shock and disbelief. The six pennies related to exchange on a cheque he had sent to pay rates. He was totally unaware of the oversight yet his nomination was declared void. A penny for his thoughts at the time would have been a coin well spent.

Soon the track leads us into the rainforest where rocks and logs, draped in velvety moss, glow in the subdued light. Below us, to the right, is a small fern-lined creek; this recedes into the background as we climb the path which now zig zags up the slope. We pass an embankment where thick horizontal layers of grey shale are exposed, contrasting dramatically with the surrounding forest floor. The track now dips down to cross the upper reaches of the aforementioned little creek and climbs into more open vegetation. From the

muted light of the rainforest we are suddenly dazzled by the sunlit brilliance of the cliff faces; a kaleidoscope of reds, golds, browns and yellows.

The path now leads us along a ledge at the base of the cliffs past a cube of sandstone through which the wind has worn a slot, giving the appearance of a large letterbox. Decorating the cliffs in this area are several clumps – one particularly large - of *Epacris reclinata*, their multitude of small tubular red flowers illuminating the scene. Some books state these plants are usually solitary, rarely found near each other; the plants here are obviously not familiar with those texts. A cluster of Rock Sprengelia (*Sprengelia monticola*) clings high on a wall of deep coppery sandstone, their pure white flowers brilliant against that cupreous background.

Soon we are in the cool enclosed environment of Wilsons Glen; named after John Wilson, a pioneering storekeeper of Mt Victoria and a Reserve Trustee. Here there are some fine examples of the Dragons Tail (*Dracophyllum secundum*) displaying sheafs of pinkish-white bell-shaped flowers. Steps cut into a rock face take us up to the path leading to Ross Cave. We pass two smaller caves along the way to this fine cavern, it has an elongated arched entry and a sturdy column separates this from a side opening; a second cave sits above and behind. James Reading Fairfax, a Reserve Trustee of the Mt Piddington area from 1879, possibly named the cave after his brother Edward Ross Fairfax; both men owned properties in the area.

Retracing our steps back to Wilsons Glen we now head toward Pulpit Rock. We pause at Bedes Lookout where an expanse of red shale on the point forms a beautiful contrasting foreground to the expansive view of verdant pastures in the Kanimbla Valley. This stunning vantage point was named after politician and barrister William Bede Dalley (1831-1888); he was acting Premier of NSW in 1885 and a member of the Privy Council in 1887.

While taking in this view rain could be seen approaching from across the valley. It was deemed prudent to have lunch here as there is a large overhang nearby should shelter be required.

The threatening showers do not eventuate, obviously blown elsewhere by the still blustery winds. So, appetites sated, we make our way toward Pulpit Rock to complete the circuit. Along the way we are treated to distant valley views and to the closer spectacle of the dramatic sheer cliffs plummeting toward the valley. The track here, as in many areas today, is decorated by the exquisite tiny tubular white flowers of the Lance-leaf Beard-heath (*Leucopogon lancealatus*), the minute blossoms borne in large numbers at the extremities of the branchlets.

Back at the cars we drive a short distance to Kenny Street to explore some further aspects of this interesting locale.

Stairs lead us down to a track which runs along the escarpment – this is the Henry Lawson Walk. The track, formed in the 1940s to celebrate Henry Lawson's connection to the area, once ran from Sunset Rock further west; unfortunately housing development has been allowed to cut that route. Lawson's father, Peder or Peter Larsen – it was his mother who changed the Norwegian name Larsen to Lawson - was a builder and carpenter living and working in Mt Victoria. Indeed it was Peter Larsen who built the schoolhouse for Henry Rienits. Henry Lawson spent a few years, on and off, in Mt Victoria helping his father with his building work and with the painting of cottages.

Above this walk is an unusual crescent-shaped rock formation which affords magnificent views into the valley and of the mountains beyond; this is Henry Lawson Rock. It is said that Henry drew inspiration for his poetry as he walked the mountain tracks and while sitting here and at Sunset Rock - he wrote several poems relating to the area.

Continuing along the track, exposed to the strong wind rushing up from the valley, we drop down past a small white-barked eucalypt,

its trunk amazingly contorted and obviously having a tough time in reaching for the sky; we arrive at the top of a steel ladder. This ladder and a subsequent set of steep stairs leads us into an enchanting grotto; we have reached the Engineers Cascades. It is thought this feature was named after the engineers who constructed the nearby Little Zig Zag. FA Franklin was a Government Engineer working on road and bridge construction in that era – an 1876 advertisement for Perry's Family Hotel at Mt Victoria talks of "Franklin's Zigzag leading to Kanimbla". Perhaps he supervised the building of the Little Zig Zag.

Overarching ledges surround three sides of this grotto while the fourth is open to the valley. The waters of a small stream leap into a pool at the head of this craggy alcove before flowing to the edge of the precipice where they normally plummet to the valley below; today the strong wind is blowing the water back up against the cliffs. What a pleasant place this would be (on a less windy day) to sit awhile and contemplate life (or what ever else took your fancy).

I was pleased to see the local youngsters had been building a low rock wall across the little stream here in an attempt to deepen the pool. How much better to see them doing something like this, rather than sitting in a dim room mesmerized by a computer screen – end of little Luddite rant.

And so we returned to the cars and drove to Memorial Park in an unsuccessful attempt to escape from the wind while we indulged in the usual after walk cup of tea and banter. Then, well satisfied after exploring just some of the many outstanding features of Mount Victoria, and well sated with the kindly donated cake and slices, we headed for home.

John Cardy

Postscript: When I typed the sentence at the beginning of this newsletter regarding the various people who had touched this walk, the spellchecker insisted there should be no comma between 'politician' and 'escaped convicts'; I imagine many would go along with that.

Henry Lawson's father died on the last day of 1888 from a heart attack, he was fifty-six; that same year Henry wrote 'The Blue Mountains' - four stanzas follow:

The stream that, crooning to itself,
 Comes down a tireless rover
 Flows calmly to the rocky shelf,
 And there leaps bravely over.

Now pouring down, now lost in spray
 When mountain breezes sally
 The water strikes the rock midway,
 And leaps into the valley

Now in the west the colours change,
 The blue with crimson blending;
 Behind the far Dividing Range
 The sun is fast descending

And mellowed day comes o'er the place,
 And softens ragged edges;
 The rising moon's great placid face
 Looks gravely o'er the ledges.

OUR OCTOBER WALK

Friday 18th October 2013

The Jewel in the Crown of the Blue Mountains – The Cradle of Conservation in New South Wales

Blue Gum Forest – Perrys Lookdown to Govetts Leap Lookout

The group has visited the Blue Gum Forest on six previous occasions; the last being in October 2010. This will be the first time we have entered via Perrys Lookdown and exited via Govetts Leap Lookout. This walk of about 12 kilometres is rated as hard and is for the more fit walkers in the group, there is a

descent and subsequent ascent of approximately 640 metres; the final 250 metres being quite steep. To experience the majestic blue gums and the valley scenery and to sit at the base of Govetts Leap Falls make it all worthwhile, but be aware of the effort required.

There is the need for a car shuffle to transport us to our starting point at Perrys Lookdown from Govetts Leap Lookout where we will leave most of the vehicles. Meet at Govetts Leap Lookout at the end of Govetts Leap Road in Blackheath at 8.30am sharp or at Merry Garth at 7.50am for an 8.00am departure; note this is a long walk and we will need to get under way on time.

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.

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 15th November – Fortress Ridge north of Leura

Friday 6th December – A Mt Wilson morning walk and our end of year Christmas luncheon. (Note the move to the FIRST Friday of the month to hopefully avoid clashes with other Christmas commitments.)

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.

11th October at Silva Plana

8th November at Founders Corner

13th December - meet at Hay Lane

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 for details