
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

Volume 23 Issue 6

June 2013

LUNCH ROCK AND THE WOLLANGAMBE

TOPIC

OUR MAY WALK

LUNCH ROCK and the
WOLLANGAMBE RIVER
near BELL

Friday 17th May 2013

Of a temperature sensibly lower than that of the living human body. So states a dictionary definition of the word 'cold'. I assure you there was nothing sensible about the temperature which was far far lower than that of this living human body when nineteen walkers gathered at Bell Railway Station for this outing. The biting wind had obviously found some snow to blow across somewhere along its journey to Bell. Yet, as English writer Jerome K Jerome stated in his 1889 publication "Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow" *The weather is like the Government, always in the wrong.* Of course the late Paul Landa, NSW Environment Minister had the perfect political counter to that, this State Minister declared the weather to be a Federal Government responsibility. Demonstrates the veracity of the oft-quoted saying attributed to Mark Twain - *Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it.*

Alison Halliday was back in the fold today after a long absence due to a rather troublesome foot; welcome back Alison.

So, suitably rugged up, except for a rather brave Alex Halliday in shorts, (even yours



Winter in the Bush

truly had zipped on the leg extensions to my shorts), we set off along Sandham Road. From a property across the road a couple of barking horses (they were far too big to be dogs) protested our presence. At the end of the paved section of road a right of way led us through the entrance to a private property and beneath a 132kv transmission line to a gate marking the boundary of the National Park. From here a firetrail led us down a steep slope and wound around into open forest country containing Brown Barrels (*Eucalyptus*

fastigata) and Hard-leaved Scribbly Gums (*Eucalyptus sclerophylla*). Being in the forest and now below the ridgeline which carries the Bells Line of Road we were protected to some extent from the icy wind.

At a fork in the firetrail we took the left-hand branch clambering over or around the many logs strewn across the track. In this area there were many fine examples which showed the tenacity of the Scribbly Gums. Trunks completely hollowed by fire; only a thin crescent of live wood supported the tree in some cases. Yet rising above these tenuous connections to mother earth are smooth silver/grey trunks and limbs shimmering in the sunlight, carrying the complex calligraphy of *Ogmograptis Scribula*, the larvae of the Scribbly Gum Moth.

We pass a few examples of the Broad-leaf Geebung (*Persoonia levis*), displaying patches

of deep red bark exposed where the loose outer bark has been removed; contrasting with this is the bright green foliage among which clusters of light green berries are nestled. The sun glints off the convoluted stems of the Curly Sedge or Old Mans Whiskers (*Caustis flexuosa*). Scattered through the undergrowth are many examples of the Sunshine Wattle (*Acacia terminalis*) their flower heads of deep golden globes light up the landscape.

At a point where the track drops down off the ridge we paused in a sunny sheltered spot for morning tea.

Continuing on we were soon at a small unnamed creek whose waters rippled across a pebble bed and disappeared below dense clumps of overhanging ferns. There is a lovely shaded clearing here, an ideal spot to pause on a hot summer day - not on a chilly morn such as this. We crossed this tiny stream, passed below some tall rock outcrops and onto an eroded track which led us up the hill beneath overarching shrubbery; fallen vegetation forced a few minor detours. As we approached the ridge a short track off to the right led us to a rocky clearing with views to a couple of domed pagodas; one jutting above the skyline the other nestled into the hillside.

Soon we emerged from the woodland onto open heath and there before us, just a short distance away, was the form of Lunch Rock. (The National Parks Association group with whom Helen and I walk know this outcrop as Submarine Rock. I believe that name was bestowed by the late John Massar who used to lead those walks. Indeed, with that image implanted on the mind, its profile from the approach side does resemble the conning tower of such a vessel rising from the waves of an ocean of heath.) In this elevated open area we were once more exposed to the biting wind; one could well imagine we were out at sea subjected to the squalls of a southerly buster.

We stood in the lee of Lunch Rock while taking in the view before some of the group explored nearby rock formations while others climbed to the top of the 'conning tower'. The

expansive three hundred and sixty degree views from up there were stunning. Near at hand the blustery conditions were generating sets of swells undulating across the heath; the crowns of the scribbly gums, which formed a quite distinct boundary line between heath and woodland, bowed and swayed before the wind.

To the south the view was framed by the ridge along which the Bells Line of Road meanders, the green/grey of the landscape interrupted by the tawny ochre scar of a sand quarry, clouds of dust billowed from this area. Imposing cliffs stood above the Wollangambe River to the north west where it has carved a twisting path of gorges as it snakes away from its source near Bald Trig about five kilometres further west on the Newnes Plateau. Pagodas dotted the landscape to the east, perched atop the ridges above the Wollangambe and its tributaries; forming the distant skyline was the profile of Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine.

While the outlook from atop Lunch Rock, which sits at an elevation of 994 metres, was rewarding, care was needed when stronger gusts hit this exposed eyrie; being blown off the rock was a distinct possibility.

Having taken our fill of the views on offer we were presently all back at the base of the rock. Next on the agenda was to walk down the ridge to a rock platform above the Wollangambe River. As this was a 'there and back' exercise we decided to leave our packs at the base of the rock - no other walkers would be out here on a day such as this. Of course not long after setting off another group of walkers arrived at the rock, but knowing bushwalkers were an honest lot we continued on our way; in fact the other group followed us down the ridge.

Just as there was nothing sensible about the temperature when we set out this morning I soon discovered, as we forced our way through the heath encroaching on the track, there was nothing sensible about my decision to zip the leg extensions from my shorts and leave them in my pack at Lunch Rock; the shrubbery was exceedingly scratchy. The

needle-like leaves of the appropriately named Dagger Hakea (*Hakea teretifolia*) and of the Needle-bush or Silky Hakea (*Hakea sericea*) played havoc with bare legs. (Odd that two opposing names, needle and silky, can be applied the one shrub; demonstrates the problem with common names I guess.)

Prominent in the expanse of heath on this rocky ridge were Conesticks (*Petrophile pulchella*) which displayed abundant grey egg-shaped cones and the Dwarf She Oak (*Allocasuarina nana*) formed feathery hillocks that undulated in the wind. Sparsely scattered along the track were examples of a tiny herb, the Mitre Weed (*Micrasacme polymorpha*) at this time displaying only a smattering of their delicate four-lobed white flowers.

An unusual form of Tea Tree was also present here. Regarded as uncommon the *Leptospermum macrocarpum* grows prolifically on this ridge. (Fairley and Moore do state that most recordings of this plant have been made north of the Bells Line of Road between Mt Wilson and the Zig Zag Railway; a pink form has been recorded along Mountain Lagoon Road. A red form exists on cliffs above the Colo River; should be easy to locate from that description.) We have encountered the pink form on Ikara Ridge. Though not in flower at this time these shrubs stood out because of their seed capsules. As the name suggests they are quite large, about fifteen millimetres diameter, and take on a silvery almost metallic appearance - unusual to say the least.

Soon we began to descend more steeply, scribbly gums appeared once more and the heath vegetation became more open. High cliffs loomed on the other side of the river. We emerged onto a rock outcrop and made our way to a rock platform with views down to the waters of the Wollangambe far below.

Below an array of fern fronds possibly of the King Fern (*Todea barbara*), hanging over a rock ledge, the river curved beneath an overhang carved over countless years by the relentless flow of water. A little further downstream a tall stark white-trunked eucalypt

grows in an impossible position on a narrow ledge, towering up in front of the sheer cliff face. There was evidence of much greater volumes of water recently rushing down this gorge with a jumble of uprooted trees and logs piled in a heap at a lower bend.

There was an unusual formation on parts of the nearby rock outcrops. Spherical nodules, about tennis ball size and smaller, were fused to the rock surface and to themselves; this writer has not seen formations like this elsewhere.

As we returned to Lunch Rock a few Hairpin Banksia (*Banksia spinulosa*) were noted displaying their golden flower spikes with wiry bluish black styles from which the common name derives. More prominent however were the Heath Banksia (*Banksia ericifolia*). Dense wind-clipped domes of green embellished with numerous long flower spikes, bright orange/red in colour. Orange styles, having minute hooks at their ends, extend well past the edge of the nectar-rich flower spike. Also standing defiantly against the forces of the wind in this area was the Blue Mountains Mallee Ash (*Eucalyptus stricta*).

Back at Lunch Rock we settled down to partake of ----- what else but lunch. Most chose to shelter on the sunny lee side of the rock, however Freda Moxom chose to perch atop a nearby rock formation; probably trying to acclimatise for her weekend camp at Wollangambe Crater – hope it went well for you Freda.

Fully fed and having soaked up enough ultraviolets in this little suntrap we began the walk back to our starting point at Bell, retracing our outward path of this morning.

As is usual when you walk any path in the opposite direction different perspectives open up and details not noted previously present themselves. On this occasion a delightful small shrub not noticed on the outward journey caught the eye. It had minute leaves and abundant tiny white five-petalled flowers with a slight tinge of pink; possibly the Fringed Heath-myrtle (*Micromyrtus ciliata*). Then there was a pair of fire-scarred scribbly

gums; one broad based with a blackened hollow wide at the base and arching up to a point, reminiscent of a church door. A nearby similarly scarred tree was much thinner; it had a tall narrow hollow contrasting markedly with its neighbour yet complementing the scene.

Back at the cars after yet another great walk we had a rather hurried cuppa, most were keen to escape the wind. As the wind was so much to the fore today I will end with what I feel is a wonderful characterisation of a biting winter wind from Kylie Tennant's 'The Battlers'.
"There was a wind, of course – the vicious westerly that makes winter a hell, a westerly biting with all the malice of the thousands of miles of barbed wire over which it had blown."

John Cardy

OUR JUNE WALK

Friday 21st June 2013

Lush Rainforest, Ferny Glens, Mossy Nooks and Crannies

Numantia Falls and the Victory Track at Faulconbridge

This is a new venue for the group except for the first kilometre of the walk. It is a creekline walk mainly through a rainforest environment. It is a medium grade walk of about 7km on mostly good tracks. There is a steepish climb to finish (as is usual on most walks in these mountains) but the rewards are many - two waterfalls, small cascades, lush greenery and bright orange stalactites and stalagmites!

Meet at 9.30am at the Corridor of Oaks in Sir Henrys Parade at Faulconbridge (cross the railway line at the level crossing just east of Faulconbridge Railway Station) or at Merry Garth at 8.00am for an 8.10am departure.

There will be a short car shuffle to our starting point in Sassafras Gully Road at Springwood.

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 19th July – Box Creek Falls and Morong Falls in the Kanangra Boyd National Park

Friday 16th August – Coxs Road and Lockyers Road at Mt York

Friday 20th September – Blue Gum Forest, Perrys Lookdown to Govetts Leap Lookout

BUSH CARE

Bush Care is held on the second Friday of each month from 9am to Noon. Any help would be very much appreciated.

14th June at Waterfall Reserve

12th July at Founders Corner

9th August at Founders Corner

Contact Libby or Beth Raines on 4756 2121 for details