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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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## MATTHIES TRACK AT MT WILSON

## TOPIC

### OUR JANUARY WALK

**MATTHIES TRACK,  
WATERFALL CREEK and  
the MILL at Mt WILSON**

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2013**

War of course throws up extreme horror, great tragedy and unbearable suffering; it can also provide quirky examples of pure happenstance. One of the possible venues for our walk today was influenced not by one but by both World Wars. Colonel Richard Owen Wynne, whose grandfather established the Wynstay Estate at Mt Wilson, spent much of his early life in England and served in the British Army during the First World War. A young Yorkshire man, Matthie Davies, served as his batman during that time. Following the war Matthie Davies and his wife Flo came to Australia with Col RO Wynne and his wife Mariamne and worked as butler and cook at Wynstay; they later ran a small guesthouse, Woodstock, in Davies Lane.

Then came the Second World War and Matthie was seconded to work in the Lithgow Arms Factory, a position he did not cherish. Col Wynne managed to get him transferred to work in Albert and Syd Kirk's timber mill at Mt Wilson where timber was milled for the manufacture of rifle butts and stocks for the war effort. Matthie Davies used to walk from his home in Davies Lane through what is now



Summer in the Bush

the Merry Garth gardens and down through the rainforest to the timber mill.

So WWI brought Matthie Davies into contact with Col Wynne and ultimately to Mount Wilson; WWII saw him working at the timber mill and establishing what became known as Matthies Track. Happenstance indeed!

A group of ten walkers gathered at Merry Garth for our first walk of the year. Two options were listed for the walk today, the open woodland along the ridge to Boronia

Point or the enclosed rainforest on the southern flank of the mountain. Predictions of record temperatures left no doubt as to which option we would take; we would follow Matthie Davies' footsteps into the shelter of the rainforest.

We pass through the farm gate into the western fringe of the Merry Garth garden with its charming blend of exotic plantings and native vegetation. The bright-green gracefully pendant branchlets of the Rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*), a visitor from across the ditch in New Zealand, mark the spot where we divert from the main path. We drop down past a Tasmanian cousin of the Rimu, a Huon Pine (*Dacrydium franklinii*) looking quite at home here as does an older specimen residing lower down the slope. Nearby, and in stark contrast to the delicate form of these visitors, are native giants of these mountains. Coast Banksias (*Banksia integrifolia var compar*) and a huge

Blaxland's Stringybark (*Eucalyptus blaxlandii*) tower up reaching for the sky; though the sky is more open now in this area following the loss of mature trees in the devastating wind storm of July 2011.

We continue down past Meredith's Corner, a tranquil spot in the garden dedicated to a cherished absent friend of Libby and arrive at the corner of the Merry Garth boundary fence.

We clamber across the fence over which Libby has thoughtfully draped some material to protect us from the sharp spikes of the barbed wire and now, with the kind permission of Wendy Smart, we are on part of the Wynstay Estate as we move deeper into the rainforest. Sunlight filters through the canopy illuminating the delicate fronds of the ground ferns accentuating their many textures and multiple shades of green; also a golden glow is added to the bronze and ochre tones of the deep leaf litter. We pass the first of many wombat burrows we would see today, including a wombat terrace; duplex burrows nestled in a single entrance hollow.

Descending the steep slope as we follow the line of Matthies Track, clearing the path where necessary as we proceed, there are fine examples of Coachwood, Sassafras and other rainforest species marching down the hillside; most stand straight and tall with gently fluted buttresses, some have bent and gnarled bases encrusted with moss. Nearing the bottom of the slope Libby points out Alberts Track coming in from the left, the route taken by Albert Kirk on his way to and from the mill which he ran with his brother Syd. We cross Priests Gully, which has just a trickle of water flowing, crest a small rise and arrive at Waterfall Creek; we are now approximately one hundred and forty metres below our starting point in Galwey Lane.

There is a pool of water upstream of the track crossing in which the surrounding forest is mirrored. A tiny cascade feeds the pool while water continuing downstream purls its way across a bed of dark rocks. Libby relates that as children she and her sisters used to run barefoot down to this idyllic spot to swim,

catch yabbies and play out many childhood adventures. I feel sure there is a flood of memories coursing through Libby's mind as she leads us downstream along the banks of Waterfall Creek.

The creek line leads us through a verdant little vale of tree ferns on mossy banks, limpid pools fed by tiny waterfalls, narrow channels and ferny glens protected from the searing sun by the rainforest canopy. Soft Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) abound here, their soft matted trunks holding aloft parasols of feathery fronds silhouetted against the filtered light. Closer to the creek banks are a few magnificent examples of the King Fern (*Todea barbara*); fronds carried atop massive stout trunks

Above the creek hang several pendulous nests of the Yellow-throated Scrubwren. My better half, Helen, ever curious, decides she will have a closer inspection of the upward sloping entrance tunnel to a nest. Not sure who is the most startled, the Scrubwren when a large eye peers into its nest or Helen when the Scrubwren decides to hastily abandon ship. The voice of this bird is described as 'clear and melodious or a harsh chatter'; the latter tone is certainly employed on this occasion.

Presently Libby leads us up the southern bank away from the creek and out into open scrubland, the increase in temperature away from the protection of the rainforest is palpable; it appears the predictions of broken records might be correct. Soon we arrive at a spot where we can get a good view of the stand of relatively young Blue Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*) adjacent to the creek; a multitude of slim straight trunks standing tall, upper trunks smooth and white, ribbons of discarded bark hanging like streamers.

We continue through open woodland now until we reach what is left of Albert and Syd Kirk's timber mill. All that now remains is a carpet of rusting corrugated iron sheets and rotting grey timber spread across the site with a couple of partially collapsed structures protruding through which support the remnants of a line shaft. The old boiler is now

so overgrown with vegetation it would not be noticed unless you were aware it was there. So this mill, which once fed on the products of the surrounding woods, is now itself being consumed by that same forest.

We now continue on toward the Wynstay Dam, along the way Libby points out a tree in the rainforest adjacent to the Mill Paddock which stands out at this time of the year as it is in flower, its crown a creamy white against the overall green of the forest canopy. Libby explains some doubt still exists as to its variety; this excites some interest in the group and we decide to skirt around the paddock and try to locate the mystery tree. We soon discover that what stood out so prominently when viewed from afar is not so easy to see from the floor of the rainforest. Admitting defeat we rest awhile in the forest, yet all is not lost; as we sit the magic of the rainforest becomes more evident. The sound of silence is punctuated occasionally by melodious bird calls, shafts of light spear through the canopy accentuating the tortuous path of thick vines climbing up to seek the energy of the sun, intersecting patterns of crust-forming lichens on smooth trunks become more intriguing the longer you study them. Rainforests do indeed provide an enchanting environment.

Rested but disappointed we did not find the mystery tree (a challenge for another day) we continue through the forest down to the Wynstay Dam. The old pump and diesel engine in the pump house catches the eye of Fred Roberts, a connoisseur of stationary engines. We tarry awhile beside the waters of this spring fed dam and take in the beauty of the rainforest-clad hillside beyond; rounded clouds of bright green foliage billowing across the slope.

Once more we head back into the rainforest and follow the line of Waterfall Creek before diverting up the slope to access the Waterfall Track. In this area there are Soft Tree Ferns growing at all manner of angles. Some were cantilevered horizontally over the creek, others had fallen to the ground their trunks lying prone while their heads bent back to a vertical position, a few were defying gravity

by leaning at impossible angles on the steep slopes yet refusing to fall; these ancient forms of vegetation are very tenacious.

A short distance along the Waterfall Track we divert to the base of the lower falls. As we brush past some ferns beside the track we disturb a large number of Gnats, an insect this writer has not seen before. The mossy little glen at the base of these falls is a perfect cool haven in which to pause for lunch.

At this time there are but a few trickles of water dropping down the dark rock face; an outcropping of the basalt cap on the mount. Tiny lush green ferns and velvety mosses contrast with the almost black cliff face and completely shroud the many large boulders strewn around this little dell. Exposed serpentine roots of the surrounding large trees cling to the vertical walls above the creek. This idyllic scene is completed by the sunshine highlighting the weeping fronds of the host of surrounding tree ferns.

Camouflaged among the exposed roots is a pipe heading downstream. This ran from a small dam above the falls to the timber mill we have just visited. It is said that an early resident of the mount, of a slightly eccentric wont, found this dam quite a pleasant pond in which to bathe. Those at the mill were less than pleased with this activity, for as well as the water being used for the boiler and other production purposes, they used it for drinking and tea making. Puts a whole new slant on a cup of tea with plenty of body.

We linger for some time in this cool retreat well aware of the high temperature awaiting when we leave the rainforest. Eventually we make the climb out of this little valley past the upper falls on a track which at times is crisscrossed with a maze of exposed roots. A short stroll along Waterfall Road and Galwey Lane delivers us back to our starting point outside Merry Garth. While some had other commitments and headed for home, a few of us joined Libby in the Fairy Glen for an after walk cuppa (without body); a fitting way in which to end a very pleasant day exploring the

enchanting fairyland of rainforest on the southern side of Mt Wilson.

John Cardy

### **MEMBER NEWS**

Two of our long time armchair walkers have decided to settle even further into their comfortable easychairs and give up their membership of the group; both have asked that their best wishes be passed on to all those they met while walking with the group. Marie Glass first walked with the group on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1995 to Lockley Pylon (I trust the views were more expansive than on our recent fog-bound visit). Heather Tabrett ventured to the Tessellated Pavement at Mt Irvine on her first walk with the group on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1996. Thank you both for your support over the years and we wish you every happiness in the future. We do hope that images collected on your walks and stored away in your memory bring you pleasure in moments of quiet reflection. Cheerio Marie and Heather from all who have enjoyed your company on the walks which you attended.

### **OUR FEBRUARY WALK**

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2013**

**Cascades and Grottoes, Spectacular Views, plus a 'Secret Track with a Spiral Lookout'**

**Nature Track, Over and Undercliff Tracks, Rocket Point and Charles Darwin Walk at Wentworth Falls**

Meet at 9.00am at Wilson Park in Falls Road just off the Great Western Highway at Wentworth Falls or at Merry Garth at 8.00am. There will be a short car shuffle to our start point in Victoria Street.

The group last visited the Nature Track section of this walk in November 2002 and the Darwins Walk section in March 2009. This walk combines the grandeur of Wentworth Falls and the Jamison Valley with the beauty of shady glens and burbling brooks; a bonus is a recently resurrected short track containing several intriguing lookouts, which lay lost for many years.

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> March – Nellies Glen and Devils Hole at Katoomba

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> April – Glow Worm Tunnel and Pagoda Track

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A little more self indulgence by Helen and me:

**IT'S A GIRL!!!** Payton Langworthy Cardy, our first granddaughter, began her life's journey on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2013. Baby and mother both fine, father beaming again! Big brother Ryley unbelievably happy and gentle! Grandparents over the moon once more!!

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### **BUSH CARE**

**Bush Care is held on the second Friday of each month from 9am to Noon. Any help would be appreciated, both by the other workers and by the native vegetation.**

**8<sup>th</sup> February at Hay Lane - Ferny Corner**

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**12<sup>th</sup> April at Galwey Lane – Jalscene End**

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