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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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## NUMANTIA FALLS AND THE VICTORY TRACK

TOPIC

### OUR JUNE WALK

NUMANTIA FALLS and the  
VICTORY TRACK –  
SPRINGWOOD to  
FAULCONBRIDGE

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2013

A city boulevard lined with fine buildings and furnished with a stately war memorial, a grand sandstone home and unfulfilled dreams, Prime Ministers, State Premiers and Chief Justices, a region in Spain and a private platform on the railway line. Not subjects you would normally associate with a rainforest walk in the Blue Mountains yet each of these things touched the route we would follow today.

It was one of those glorious mountain mornings when sixteen walkers gathered at the Prime Ministers Corridor of Oaks at Faulconbridge. We welcomed two visitors - Jenny Leary, a friend of Barbara Harry, and Peter Henchman of Mountain Lagoon - a neighbour of Michael Ihm and John Meade. The crisp fresh apples we have enjoyed on a couple of recent walks came from Peter's orchard via Michael.

Libby unfortunately was unable to join us today so, in stark contrast to her usual efficient organisation, a rather shambolic effort by yours truly somehow managed to result in a successful car shuffle to our starting point, the trackhead in Sassafras Gully Road at



Winter in the Bush

Springwood. In Libby's absence I led the group today and Allan Cupitt took on the job of whip; surprisingly no one pulled out because of these arrangements, what a trusting lot! And so we set off down the Sassafras Gully Track.

Before the group could build up too much momentum we divert to the right to the remains of an old shelter shed for an early morning tea stop; the remnants of substantial sandstone block walls provided good seating around the level floor area. From this spot a steel transmission line tower

can be seen in the distance across the valley; we would finish this walk in the vicinity of that tower.

Continuing on we descend through open woodland past some magnificent Smooth-barked Apples or Sydney Red Gums (*Angophora costata*), their dimpled knobby trunks crying out to be touched as you pass. There is a sudden and decided drop in temperature as we enter the rainforest zone. Here we begin to hear the gurgle and tinkle of the small stream flowing beside the track; we would be accompanied by this soothing sound for most of this walk.

Soon we cross this small stream and the bright yellow blossoms of the Guinea Flower (*Hibbertia* sp) illuminate the track. We then pass below some dramatic rock overhangs embellished with the remains of ancient swirl pools and amazing windworn patterns. Below

us to the right the stream trickles between huge moss-cloaked boulders.

We recross the stream on exposed bedrock above a small cascade, then cross a tiny side stream. The track now contours past some majestic Turpentines (*Syncarpia glomulifera*), their tall straight trunks clothed in deeply furrowed fibrous bark; scattered on the forest floor are many tiny 'flying saucer' shaped seed capsules of these forest giants.

The track dips below another overhang on our right which contains a small natural spring emanating from between huge boulders. A faded sign, no longer there, once declared this to be 'Ye Olde Fountain'. Presently the track drops more steeply and delivers us to Sassafras Creek and the beginning of the Victory Track. At this track junction there are three old metal signs still affixed high on a tree (probably higher than when first fixed) pointing the way to Faulconbridge, Perch Ponds and Sassafras Gully Road; we follow the sign to Faulconbridge.

This track leads us beside the creek for a short distance past moss-encrusted tree trunks and boulders, crosses the stream beside a wonderfully patterned rockface and climbs above Sassafras Creek to meander gently through stunningly beautiful forest. At times there is no understorey and the leaf litter of the forest floor is dotted with mossy rocks, in other areas there is a tangle of growth enclosing the track. Shortly we drop down to a clearing; we are at the junction of Sassafras and Numantia Creeks.

Here we leave the Victory Track and make our way along an indistinct footpad which follows Numantia Creek. This faint path leads us through a lush world of overwhelming greenness as it rises and falls beside this pretty little stream. Soon the volume of the water music increases; we cross the creek at a sand bar, pass a large fungi-encrusted log and suddenly emerge at the base of Numantia Falls.

Secreted in the valleys of these mountains are many outstanding features of great beauty; Numantia Falls is one of the most enchanting.

The waters tumble over a series of cascades before dropping vertically as a curtain into a pool which reflects the surroundings; a sandy beach encloses the pool. To the right of the falls is a high overhang supporting clusters of stalactites above a large pulpit-like stalagmite. On the left of the falls the pool extends into a deep cave below a low-pitched roof of flat rock. The reddish hued rock of the cliffs and the overhang are decorated with a variety of ferns. Truly a sight to behold; what better place to pause for lunch?

Numantia is a region in northern Spain where the ancient city of the same name was besieged and taken by Scipio the Younger in 134 BC, why then do these falls take on that name? Some of those links mentioned at the beginning of the newsletter explain.

Sir James Martin was Chief Justice of NSW and was also State Premier in 1863-65, 1866-69 and 1870-72. Martin Place in Sydney was named after him. Sir James Martin acquired extensive land holdings west of Faulconbridge. A map published with the 1879 Railway Guide of New South Wales shows his holdings both south and north of the railway line between Faulconbridge and present day Linden. That 1879 Railway Guide states: 'When the train has passed the Platform at Faulconbridge it -----reaches the platform at Numantia, the classical name selected for the temporary residence of His Honor Sir James Martin, the Chief Justice ---. Near here Sir James Martin is building a large family mansion.' The falls took their name from the Martin estate.

The temporary weatherboard home stood behind a high stone wall adjacent to the private platform of Numantia, opened 9 February 1876 to service the Martin estate. (The wall can still be seen today on the south side of the railway line.) The foundations for the 'large family mansion' were laid but the mansion was never built; it became known as 'Martin's Folly'. The foundations were later used to build 'Banool' c1914 at No1 Martin Place at Linden. Sir James must have had a penchant for having streets named after his good self; as well as the famous city boulevard

there are Martin Places in Linden and Faulconbridge.

With some reluctance we leave this captivating spot and retrace the footpad back to Sassafras Creek. Just downstream from the falls the faint line of a track can be seen which once led down from the Numantia Estate.

Back on the Victory Track we cross Numantia Creek and initially climb steeply above Sassafras Creek, the track then levels to some extent as it contours above the creekline. We pass a couple of impressive rock overhangs above the track while below, the trunks of a few forest giants fallen long ago, lie across the creek draped in velvety green moss. After dropping down to cross a tributary of the creek at a fern-filled mossy glen, a short climb brings us to the sidetrack to Clarinda Falls, named after Clarinda Varney, first wife of Sir Henry Parkes. Here the water cascades down ferny rock ledges to drop into the creek adjacent to a dark cave. The rock ledges carry bright orange stains; not due to pollution but resulting from bacteria which cause oxidation of the iron present in the water. There are a couple of spots where small orange stalagmites and stalactites have formed.

The track from Faulconbridge Station to these falls was built around 1880; the start of the 'golden age' of track making in the mountains which extended to World War One. It was subsequently continued on to The Sassafras Gully Track and named the Victory Track in 1919 following victory in World War One. It is appropriate here to mention another of those links referred to earlier; the 'stately war memorial' is of course The Cenotaph in Martin Place – a double link to this area.

From this point on it is all uphill. There is a sudden change in environment from rainforest to open woodland; we are back in the preferred locale of Angophoras and pass several stunning examples. We climb past some long rock overhangs and striking shelter caves to emerge onto Sir Henrys Parade near the Corridor of Oaks. But what of the 'grand sandstone mansion' mentioned at the beginning? That is yet to come.

The cars are retrieved from Springwood and we drive toward Linden along Sir Henrys Parade. A short walk along the ridge brings us to the ruin of 'Weemala', a once grand sandstone mansion. Built by wealthy businessman Andrew McCulloch in the early 1880s this magnificent country house boasted a tall viewing tower (still standing), beautifully crafted sandstone bay windows, ornate chimneys and featured a crest over the main door bearing the inscription 'VIET ANIMO'. Patrick (Paddy) Ryan, a local stonemason, built the mansion. Beautiful gardens with an ornamental lake and a tennis court surrounded the house.

McCulloch experienced financial difficulties by the end of the 1880s and sold the property to JW Cliff who also made use of the Numantia Platform. The property again changed hands in 1907 when solicitor George Evans purchased it along with the neighbouring Numantia property. The mansion subsequently changed hands several times. In 1968 its restoration, after years of decay, was completed - just prior to the disastrous fires of that year which destroyed it. Vandals are now destroying the majestic ruin.

We walk back to the railway line and inspect the remains of the Numantia Platform which started life as a private platform in 1876 and closed in 1897, then a public platform. To stand at these two ruins gives a glimpse into a lifestyle far removed from that of today. So ends a walk combining the scenic beauty with some history of these wondrous mountains.

While the usual after walk cuppa was being enjoyed back at the Corridor of Oaks, I strolled among the oaks, a tree planted for each of our Australian Prime Ministers. The stone and plaque at the base of each tree appears to have been recently renewed; the whole park looking in better shape than the last time I saw it some years ago. I noted with a wry smile that when standing in front of the trees for John Howard and Kevin Rudd the apexes have a decided lean, Howard's to the right and Rudd's to the left. A landscaper with a sense of humour or perhaps a greater power at work?

John Cardy

**OUR JULY WALK****Friday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2013****THE 300<sup>th</sup> WALK FOR THIS GROUP!****Cascading and Tall Waterfalls, Dramatic Cliffs and Boundless Views****Box Creek Falls and Morong Falls in the Kanangra-Boyd National Park**

This is a new venue for the group, it comprises two relatively short walks to spectacular waterfalls, each walk is separated by a brief drive. The venue is approximately 100km from Mt Wilson, 80km from Mt Victoria with the last 25km unsealed. **4WD or high clearance vehicles would be much appreciated.** (With care 2WD vehicles could negotiate the unsealed roads involved.) The longish drive to this superb venue is through such wonderful countryside you will be there before you realise. The first walk will take us part way down the side of Box Creek Falls with views back up the cascades. The second walk will take us to a view of the high Morong Falls. Expansive views across the Boyd Plateau are also on offer.

**Meet at the Mt Victoria Railway Station Parking Area at 8.30am or at Merry Garth at 7.50am for an 8.00am departure. Those coming from the Lithgow area may prefer to meet at the hotel in Hampton on the Jenolan Caves Road at 9.00am. Early notification of your attendance would be appreciated to allow Libby ample time to organise vehicle rationalisations.**

Bring morning tea, lunch, 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.**

**SPECIAL MEMBER NEWS**

**We have all known for many years that our dedicated leader Libby is a legend; goes without saying for anyone who has enjoyed the bushwalks she has organised and led**

**over the years. Recently that status became official when Libby was awarded the Bushcare Legend Award for 2012 by the Blue Mountains City Council; the award carries with it a handsome Golden Trowel trophy.**

**The Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Bushcare Group grew out of this bushwalking group in 1999. The seed was sown when Libby and Mary Reynolds noticed, during our walks, the good bushcare work being carried out in other areas in the mountains.**

**Libby was quick to deflect the honour from herself onto all the members of the bushcare group, but of course it requires strong and enthusiastic leadership for any group to thrive and survive for fourteen years.**

**Congratulations from us all Libby.**

**FUTURE WALKS** (Tentative schedule)

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> August – Coxs Road and Lockyers Road on Mount York

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> 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, even for a short time, would be appreciated both by the other workers and by the native vegetation.**

**12<sup>th</sup> July at Founders Corner**

**9<sup>th</sup> August at Founders Corner**

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