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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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## ZIRCON CREEK AREA AT MT WILSON

## TOPIC

### OUR DECEMBER WALK

**ZIRCON CREEK, FIELDS  
SELECTION and SMITHS  
HILL at MT WILSON**

**Friday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

Another year has slipped away. Another year in which we have enjoyed exploring so many gems hidden in the treasure-trove which is the wondrous Blue Mountains. Let us recapture just some of the treasures we have experienced by following a pathway paved with precious stones - the birthstones for each month of the past year.

January has the garnet as its birthstone; a deep red gem also used as an abrasive. There was certainly nothing abrasive about our January walk on Matthies Track into the lush cool rainforest below Merry Garth, past the old mill of Albert and Syd Kirk and via the Wynstay dam to the Waterfall Track. The ramble downstream from Matthies Track, along the mossy fern-filled banks of Waterfall Creek was, for me, the gem of this walk. There were several pendulous nests of the Yellow-throated Scrubwren suspended here. My always-inquisitive better half Helen peered into the entrance tunnel of one of the nests; a startled Scrubwren quickly evacuated resulting in an even more startled Helen. Lunch at the Lower Falls on the Waterfall Track rounded off this



Summer in the Bush

walk; even without much water flowing this little grotto of green is an enchanting retreat.

The amethyst, a coarsely crystallised purple or violet quartz, is the birthstone for February. This month we explored the Nature Track, Over and Undercliff tracks, Stonehaven Pass and Darwins Walk at Wentworth Falls. The secluded waterfalls at Asmodeus Pool and Floras Bath, the panoramic views, the amble beside Jamison Creek along Darwins Walk to the accompaniment of the soothing sounds of running water

interrupted at the end by the cacophony of screeching Black Cockatoos are memories from this walk. The highlight for me however was the stunning distant views and the sculptured rock formations at our lunch spot, the Bill Wilson Lookout on the Stonehaven Pass. Amethysts are supposed to prevent drunkenness; they would however be hard pressed to stop the intoxicating effect of the views from this eyrie.

March has the aquamarine as its birthstone. This light-blue or greenish blue transparent stone is the symbol of youth and health; attributes that would have been most welcome on the rather strenuous walk this month. We descended through Nellies Glen to the Megalong Valley and ascended through the Devils Hole, then walked the Bonnie Doon Track to return to the Explorers Marked Tree. On this walk we had a visitor from Austria,

Laura, a friend of Jane Mayne. She was delighted to see some kangaroos and young wallabies in the wild, followed by a yabby in the Devils Hole, far from any body of water; even we Aussies were amazed to see that! The huge boulder wedged high up between the cliffs forming the narrow cleft that is the Devils Hole was the stand out spectacle on this walk; appropriately under the aquamarine birthstone, the unnamed waterfalls below Devils Hole were also rather special after recent rain.

In April we ventured across the Newnes Plateau to walk the Pagoda Track and explore the Glow Worm Tunnel. A girl's best friend, the diamond, is the birthstone for April and this area is certainly a diamond in the crown of spectacular features in these mountains. The domed beehive pagodas, with their thin contorted ledges and veins of ironstone, presented a stunning sight clustered along the hillsides and the walk along the Old Coach Road through the tall open forest was a wonderful experience. The highlights however were the tiny inhabitants of the tunnel - the glow worms. Sparkling brightly on the walls and ceiling they appeared, appropriately enough, as diamonds in the sky.

The emerald, the birthstone for the month of May, is reputed to protect chastity and to ward off evil spirits, epilepsy and dysentery and to aid weak eyesight. It must be true, no one on our May walk suffered any of those afflictions, from atop Lunch Rock we could see forever and as far as I know everyone remained chaste. One memorable thing about our May walk to Lunch Rock and to the upper reaches of the Wollangambe was the biting cold wind when we met at Bell Railway Station; a brisk start to the walk soon warmed us however. The three hundred and sixty degree views from atop Lunch Rock on such a clear day was the stand out feature of this walk yet the unusual globular rock formations above the Wollangambe stick in my mind.

June has the pearl as its birthstone, a symbol of purity. It was indeed a pure pleasure to walk through the Sassafras Gully, Victory Track and Numantia Creek rainforest areas

between Springwood and Faulconbridge. We also visited the ruins of the once grand sandstone mansion "Weemala" and the remains of the Numantia Platform, still sitting beside the main western railway line between Faulconbridge and Linden. Among the many highlights on this walk were the 'fairytale' rainforest along Numantia Creek and Numantia Falls with its beach and pool extending under a deep cave at its base. Two small pearls, intriguing features which remain embedded in the memory, are 'Ye Olde Fountain', a natural spring spurting from a rock crevice along the Sassafras Gully Track and a small bright-orange stalactite and stalagmite among the vivid-green mosses and ferns beside Clarinda Falls on the Victory Track. One could be excused (perhaps) for calling this walk a pearler.

We travelled to the Boyd Plateau in the Kanangra-Boyd National Park for our July walk. The ruby is the birthstone for July. It was believed the ruby banished grief, repressed the ill effects of luxuries and diverted the mind from evil thoughts. Our twin destinations for today, Box Creek Falls and Morong Falls achieved all of that and more. The long but spectacular drive via Jenolan Caves was well rewarded by the breathtaking sight of the water of these falls plunging down the granite cliffs to the Kowmung River far below. The ruby is the symbol of nobility; perfectly applicable to the compelling memory from this day, the image and power of those falls. A very artistic stone cairn sitting atop a large granite boulder also remains in the memory as of course does the celebratory cake to mark the 300<sup>th</sup> walk for the group. The ruby is supposed to divert evil thoughts. I am afraid however that every time I think of this walk I conjure up images of Ken Maynard's raggle-taggle Ettamogah Pub cartoon crowd, brought to my mind as I watched some of our group clamber into the back of Bob Bearup's ute to cross the ford at Morong Creek.

The peridot is the birthstone for August. This gem is a rare transparent green variety of the common mineral olivine; it symbolises happiness. Indeed we were very happy when

we gathered at Mt York for this walk. It was a perfect day - a clear sky and not a breath of wind. In this bicentenary year of Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson's crossing of the mountains we walked down Coxs Road to Hartley Vale and returned via Lockyers Road. Among the stand outs on this walk for me was getting a clear view of Mt Blaxland with its triangular array of metal sheets marking the end point in the journey by the explorers. The stonework carried out by the convict teams is always impressive no matter how often one sees it and the image of walking through a meadow of Sunshine Wattle in full bloom certainly sticks in the mind; happiness indeed.

September has the deep blue sapphire as its birthstone; this gem symbolises clear thinking and wisdom. (I wonder how many of our politicians were born under this birthstone.) This month we ventured down the Little Zig Zag at Mt Victoria, visited the Bushrangers Cave, walked Rienits Pass and Wilsons Glen to Ross Cave before taking the Henry Lawson Walk past Henry Lawson Rock to the Engineers Cascade. The view out through the vertically elongated diamond-shaped entrance of Bushrangers Cave, large clusters of Rock Sprengelia on the cliffs and an amazingly contorted small eucalypt come to mind for this walk. The view from Bedes Lookout however was a stand out for me; the red shale bed at the lookout contrasting dramatically with the deep-blue of the sapphire sky.

As well as symbolising hope and love the opal, birthstone for the month of October has long been deemed to bring bad luck. The full gamut of these attributes was on show this month. Fires raged across the mountains destroying hundreds of homes and thousands of hectares of bushland. The extreme bad, nay disastrous, luck wrought on many was followed by the overwhelming love and hope offered to the victims by the community. Our planned walk to the Blue Gum Forest was of course cancelled; we hope to do that walk in March.

The topaz is the birthstone for November. Yellow, white, green, blue or indeed colourless are the shades of this multi-hued

gem. Under this birthstone we experienced the magnificent multi-coloured sandstone cliffs and walls surrounding the Grose and Govett Gorges when we visited Fortress Hill north of Leura. The expansive views were indeed the outstanding highlight of this walk; views into the valleys, of the surrounding cliffs and mounts and down to the Blue Gum Forest – thankfully saved from the fires.

And so we come to the last walk for the year, the end of our stroll down the path paved with birthstones. A touch of happenstance, or perhaps serendipity; the birthstone for December is the blue zircon and our end of year walk is in the Zircon Creek area of Mt Wilson.

The blue zircon symbolises prosperity, good fortune and success. The nineteen walkers who gathered at Merry Garth for this walk had good fortune indeed, the blustery winds and showers which began on the afternoon of the previous day had abated.

We drove to the parking area adjacent to Zircon Creek on the Mount Irvine Road and walked back to Boggy Bend. We turned left into the bush and made our way to an outcrop of rock where there were views across Waterfall Creek and over Bowens Creek to Mount Tomah, Beraming and beyond. We then made our way down a steep trail below towering Blue Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*) festooned with discarded ribbons of bark and crossed a small tributary of Waterfall Creek where many examples of Black Wattle (*Callicoma serratifolia*) stood. There were many 'cicada sticks' in this area, sticks covered with dozens of frills in the bark caused by cicadas incising and lifting the bark to lay an egg beneath – fascinating.

A fairly steep climb took us up past a plethora of Grass-leaf Trigger Plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*) displaying copious heads of brilliant pink flowers, each with its pollen laden column cocked, ready to be triggered by a feeding insect (or inquisitive human). Soon we were on the track to Fields Selection where we paused for morning tea. Above the gate here a Native Clematis or Travellers Joy

(*Clematis aristata*) twines through a host shrub displaying at this time clusters of silky white feather tails attached to its seed vessels; a delightful sight against the blue sky.

We dropped down toward Zircon Creek noting the exotic trees of Lindfield Park visible above the rainforest canopy, crossed the creek and once again climbed steeply through rainforest, then open forest, to return to Mt Irvine Road. We skirted past the Gowan Ross dam and emerged onto Smith Road to climb up to Smiths Hill. Here the impact of the recent fires was plainly evident; the extent of burnt bush to the north is amazing to see and how close it came to homes here and on Farrer Road West is frightening. Libby had arranged with Michael Sweeney that we cut through his property to the source of Zircon Creek. We descended steeply through the most magical pocket of dense rainforest, containing an amazing array of twisting, spiralling vines and past a fern-filled cave; the sparse waters of the creek spilling softly from the overhang. We passed the small dam below which there is a delightful tiny cascade and had now reached our starting point.

We returned to Merry Garth and, thanks once again to the generous hospitality of Libby and Keith, indulged in our end of year luncheon in the garden of that blessed enclosure. A delightful end to another year of walks - splendid company in exquisite surroundings.

John Cardy

## OUR JANUARY WALK

**Friday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

**Explore the Rugged Country between Bells Line of Road and Mt Irvine**

**Bowens Creek Road – Bilpin to Mt Irvine**

Follow the meanderings of this historic road as it drops down from Bilpin into the Bowens Creek gorge and then climbs up to Mt Irvine.

The group last walked this road in August 2010; much has changed since then! The wrath of Mother Nature and the neglect by bumbling bureaucrats have combined to significantly alter this historic and strategic

road, rendering it impassable by vehicles.

Come along and examine the present state of the road and assess the possibility of it being repaired as an escape route in light of the recent fires. (Remember the tragic fate of people in one-exit areas in Victoria.)

**Note: As this walk will require a long and perhaps more complex than normal car shuffle from Mt Irvine to Bilpin, early notification of your attendance will be essential. We may need to ask people who normally car share to bring their own car as additional vehicles may be required for the shuffle. Libby will require time to finalise the details and then contact people to inform them of various meeting places and times.**

**The walk will commence at 10.00am on the Bowens Creek Road (Signposted Old Bells Line of Road and Mt Irvine Road) off the Bells Line of Road at Bilpin (just west of the little BP petrol station and store).**

Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.

**Contact – as early as possible - Libby Raines on 4756 2121 (after 7pm) or Helen and John Cardy on 9871 3661 or on mobile 0418 646 487.**

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## FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2014 – Grand Canyon – Evans Lookout to Neates Glen

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2014 – Blue Gum Forest – Perrys Lookdown to Govetts Leap Lookout

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## 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.**

**10<sup>th</sup> January – No Bushcare this month**

**14<sup>th</sup> February – Meet at Hay Lane**

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