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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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## BOX CREEK FALLS AND MORONG FALLS

## TOPIC

### OUR JULY WALK

**BOX CREEK FALLS and  
MORONG FALLS in the  
KANANGRA-BOYD  
NATIONAL PARK**

**Friday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

It only needed a couple of shabby cigarette-smoking cattle dogs sitting on the roof and a workboot-wearing cockatoo flying overhead screeching 'Struth' and it could well have been a scene from bush cartoonist Ken Maynard's Ettamogah Pub. My seriously weird mind conjured up that thought as I watched the first group of our walkers in Rob Bearup's ute being ferried across the ford at Morong Creek. (Incidentally, Ken Maynard's cocky wears the boots because the corrugated iron roof of the pub is far too hot for its feet.)

Cartoon images may well have popped into my mind at that instant however some of the actual images we were treated to today were magnificent.

The weather did not look too promising when we gathered at Mt Victoria Station for a vehicle rationalisation. We welcomed Alice Simpson and Robbie Feyder who are not able to join us all that often; they were keen to give their shiny new 4WD a taste of what unsealed roads and fire trails have to offer. As we made our way toward Hampton, where we met Fred Roberts and further rationalised the vehicles



Winter in the Bush

for the drive to Kanangra-Boyd National Park, rain began to fall and it had that ominous set-in look. Unperturbed we set off along Jenolan Caves Road. Many thanks to Robbie, Fred, Alex Halliday and John Meade for providing their vehicles and for driving the longish route to our destination for today.

We proceeded through the eclectic landscape of picturesque farms, pine forests and native bushland and dropped down the sinuous ribbon of road carved into the mountainside which delivers us to that monumental edifice; the

Grand Arch at Jenolan Caves. What an evocative sight this is. The Blue Lake below us to the left, that window to the sky which is Carlotta Arch high above to the right, fleeting glimpses into the mysterious darkness of the Devil's Coachhouse and the yawning mouth of the Grand Arch inviting us to enter the bowels of the limestone mountain. Having emerged on the other side of the mountain and passed the charming Caves House we began the steep, rather tortuous climb out of this enchanting valley.

At the junction of the Jenolan Caves and Kanangra Walls Roads we met Rob Bearup in his 4WD ute; he then led our little convoy, carrying fifteen walkers, into the Kanangra-Boyd National Park. The wet road surface took on an ochre sheen as it led us through open woodland; the colours of the bark on

smooth-trunked trees, and of the foliage generally, were intensified by the moisture.

Should we have been following this track in the late summer of 1931 we may have encountered a young couple pushing their infant son in an unusual looking pram; their much-loved dog accompanying them. That couple would have been Myles and Margaret Dunphy. Myles, as well as being father to the young boy in the pram, became known as the Father of Australian Conservation. Myles spent many years exploring and mapping this area; he came to love it so much that he named the young infant in the pram Milo Kanangra Dunphy. Myles and Margaret modified and fitted out the pram to carry camping equipment and provisions as well as their eighteen month old son on the one hundred and ten kilometre walk from Oberon to Kanangra Walls and return. Their dog was not forgotten, they made leather boots to protect its feet on the long journey; both the pram and the boots are now in the National Museum in Canberra.

After about seventeen kilometres along Kanangra Walls Road we turned onto the Kowmung River Fire Trail. This trail took us past two large tracts of swamp, the first unnamed, the second being Boyd Hill Swamp; both of these swamp areas provide feedwater for Box Creek. We travelled through impressive open forest, which has very little understorey, noticed the presence of granite outcroppings and after about eight kilometres arrived at the Box Creek Fire Trail. We parked here near Gillespies Lookout, a cluster of granite tors, which normally affords panoramic views across the Kowmung and Tuglow Rivers toward Shooters Hill and Porters Retreat; today the light rain and low cloud obscured that vista.

We donned our rain gear and had a quick morning tea break in the light drizzle while admiring Alice and Robbie's newly-christened BMW, beginning now to look like a 'real' 4WD with a generous coating of Kanangra-Boyd mud; it can now parade proudly around the suburban neighbourhood.

Following a check walk Helen and I did in this area with Rob Bearup in March this year, Rob returned and placed ribbons at suitable intervals to indicate the path to the falls; quite fetching they were too with their blue and white stripes.

Soon after we set off along the obviously seldom-used fire trail a long low bank of granite was noted off to the right. This natural array of lichen-encrusted boulders gave the appearance of a well-built dry-stone wall created by the hand of a master craftsman; some would say that is exactly what it was.

Having come to the end of discernible fire trail we began following Rob's trail of engaging striped ribbons. They led us along the ridge then skirted around a dense thicket of tea tree, across a rock shelf and up a small gully pockmarked by the foraging of fauna. The drizzle had almost stopped by now and glimpses through the trees to the left revealed that the clouds were lifting and opening up the distant views so we diverted to a group of granite tors to take in the vista now on offer. Wisps of mist were rising from the deep valleys and beyond the tree-clad mountains there were large expanses of open grazing land on the distant slopes. A wonderful panorama.

Presently we were looking down onto a section of the Box Creek Falls, the water plunging over one of the many cliff edges it encounters on its journey to the valley floor. We made our way to the top of the falls, along the way getting a view of one of the many lower pools and of the first drop of the falls. Here the tranquil clear waters suddenly become a surge of turbulent white as they plummet down this ravine. The height of the stream at this time meant there was no convenient safe spot to cross and clamber down for a view back up the cascades so that option was abandoned and we made our way back to the cars. Along the way we passed many tallish banksias carrying an abundance of small flower spikes; they were examples of the Silver Banksia (*Banksia marginata*). I had only seen this banksia as a small windblown shrub on exposed heath and was surprised to see them growing so tall. Also the edges of the

narrow leaves were not toothed, another aspect I had not encountered before. Fairley and Moore state this shrub does have either toothed or entire leaf margins; the variations in nature appear endless.

Once more in the cars Rob led us back along the Kowmung River Fire Trail for about two kilometres where we turned onto the Morong Creek Fire Trail, a further two and a half kilometres brought us to a clearing adjacent to Morong Creek, here we paused for lunch. 'Morong' is an Aboriginal word for 'bleak'. Paradoxically, the conditions here beside the creek were far less bleak than earlier in the day.

On the origin of place names Jim Barrett states in his book on the subject that the Aboriginal name Koo-nang-goor-wa applied to the section near the Coxs River junction of what is now known as Kanangra Creek. William Govett used a corruption of this when he named the stream Kanangaroo Creek in 1833. The name Kanangra, which was ultimately applied to the area and many features within it, is an Aboriginal word for 'beautiful' or 'beautiful view'; appropriate enough but a further step away from the mystical sounding original Koo-nang-goor-wa. The origin of the 'Boyd' part of the Kanangra-Boyd name has eluded Jim Barrett (and me).

To continue on to Morong Falls we needed to cross Morong Creek at the nearby ford. Rob had very thoughtfully brought some planks and a couple of besser blocks in the back of his ute to perhaps form a walkway across the ford. During the lunch break Rob had inspected the ford and found it much wider than he had anticipated, too wide for his planks, but that it would be negotiable in his 4WD ute. The group divided in two and the first adventurers clambered aboard to be transported across the waters. As well as getting us across the creek with dry feet Rob continued on to the gate on the Morong Falls Fire Trail, saving about one and a half kilometres walking.

From the gate, beside which someone had built a rather artistic cairn atop a boulder, it

was a meandering undulating walk to the end of the fire trail through lovely open forest dotted with granite tors. A scramble down a narrow footpad led us to a viewing spot near the top of Morong Falls.

What a grand sight. Above us the water tumbled down between granite cliffs and a jumble of giant granite boulders. The foaming agitated water calmed briefly as it pooled below our feet before leaping once more over the edge of a precipice to continue its plunge toward the Kowmung River in the Morong Deep, about two hundred and fifty metres below. Nearby a narrow silver band of water dropped from beneath a huge rounded boulder, below which a smaller almost spherical boulder nestled, and splashed into a clear rippling pool, a splendid cameo; the wonders of nature never fail to delight the eye.

After resting here awhile, taking in the sights, sounds and atmosphere of this magnificent waterfall, we made our way back to the gate where Rob once more transported us back across the creek. Libby was offered a seat in the front but she was quick to refuse, keen to ride in the back with the rest of us hillbillies.

Back at our lunch spot we had our usual after walk cuppa, yet this day was far from usual. It was the three hundredth walk since the formation of the group in May 1990. Libby of course is the only one of those original seventeen still walking with the group. Indeed she would have walked on the vast majority of those three hundred walks; the person who had the second longest active association is the co-founder of the group Mary Reynolds.

Helen Cardy created a beautiful cake for the occasion, decorated with native flora (not from the national park of course), mounted on a board and surrounded by a selection of photographs from past walks. The cake was delicious with most people having seconds; I displayed my usual will power and self-restraint and had two and a half pieces.

And so, with the light beginning to fade we headed for home after a wonderful day on the Kanangra-Boyd Plateau.

Light rain again began to fall and driving in the dark on wet forest roads is not all that pleasant so once again many thanks to our drivers. By the way Alice and Robbie, have you washed the trophy mud off the BMW yet?

John Cardy

## OUR AUGUST WALK

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> August 2013

**Extensive Valley and Mountain Views, Impressive Cliffs, Open Forest and a Large Slice of Early Colonial History**

**Coxs and Lockyers Roads – Mt York to Hartley Vale and Return**

The group last walked this circuit in June 2007; it is a relatively easy walk with a steepish descent into the valley via Coxs Road and a gentler climb out via Lockyers Road.

Come along and walk a path first trodden by Europeans 200 years ago, touch pick marks cut by convicts in 1814; soak up the history as you absorb the beauty of the natural surroundings.

**Meet at the Mt York parking area at the end of Mt York Road at 9.00am or at Merry Garth at 8.20am for an 8.30am departure.**

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.**

## VALE BRUCE GAILEY

One of the foundation members of this walking group, Bruce Gailey, sadly left us in early July. Bruce and his wife Sue were among the seventeen walkers who ventured to the Tessellated Pavements at Mt Irvine on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> May 1990, the inaugural walk for this group. Bruce and Sue were regular walkers with the group and were willing bush care workers until they left their much-loved property Circadia at Mt Irvine to move to the North Coast.

**Bruce was a multi-talented and ever willing ‘Mr Fixit’ who helped out so many people on the mountain not only by repairing some piece of machinery or appliance but also with his cheery presence while doing so.**

**Helen and I had the good fortune of meeting Bruce when we first walked with the group in March 1996. Though not tall of stature Bruce was a mountain of good will, good deeds and good cheer, my lingering image of Bruce is of a broad smile on an always-happy face below a shock of snow-white hair.**

**Sincere condolences go to Sue and her family on their loss from all those who had the good fortune to have walked, either literally or figuratively, with Bruce.**

John Cardy

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## FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

**NB:** The Blue Gum Forest walk has been moved from September to October to take advantage of the extra available daylight.

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> September – Little Zig Zag, Bushrangers Cave and Rienits Pass at Mt Victoria

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> October – Blue Gum Forest, Perrys Lookdown to Govetts Leap Lookout

Friday 15<sup>th</sup> November – Fortress Ridge north of Leura

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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 both by the other workers and by the native vegetation.**

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

**13<sup>th</sup> September at Wynne Reserve**

**11<sup>th</sup> October at Silva Plana**

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