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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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LEURA CASCADES TO REIDS PLATEAU

TOPIC

## OUR JUNE WALK

PRINCE HENRY CLIFF  
WALK from LEURA  
CASCADES to REIDS  
PLATEAU at KATOOMBA

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2015

What, you may well ask, happened to the planned walk to the Ruined Castle? Let me explain.

To borrow British novelist, dramatist and statesman, Baron Lytton's famous and oft copied opening to his 1830 novel 'Paul Clifford' - *It was a dark and stormy night* on the eve of this walk; incessant rain pattered against the windows, this inclement weather continued into the early morning. In these conditions Libby felt it would be prudent to remain on the escarpment rather than tackle what could be quite slippery conditions leading down to the valley; the Prince Henry Cliff Walk was chosen as an appropriate alternative.

The weather did understandably discourage some walkers; indeed the trip from Sydney was through almost continuous mostly light rain. As we drove past Echo Point however we were pleasantly surprised to see a view into the valley under a sky beginning to clear.

Twelve walkers gathered at Katoomba Falls Reserve well rugged up in the rather chilly but dry conditions. We welcomed Bob Bearup back after a longish absence, indeed he was so



Winter in the Bush

glad to be back he paid his membership dues for a second time. Libby explained the change of plans to the group and quickly had a car shuffle organised to transport us to the car park at Leura Cascades.

In light of the recent rain it was decided a viewing of the Leura Cascades would be well worthwhile. We made our way past the faux rock shelter and archway and down the track toward the cascades. (I do hope these concrete structures are under preservation orders, although rather kitsch they evoke a feeling of family

picnics and outings to these mountains in bygone days.)

The cascades were indeed in full flow. As well as visual beauty they provided aural delights as the water tumbled down the steps of the sloping bedrock and dropped into the sandy-bottomed pool below the mouth of a shelter cave. Here it was calmed momentarily as it flowed along a more level watercourse before leaping over the cliff edge to form the Bridal Veil Falls. We paused awhile in the shelter cave to take in the beauty of this splendid water feature provided by Mother Nature.

Back above the head of the cascades we turned left onto the Prince Henry Cliff Walk, named in October 1934 after the Duke of Gloucester when the first section of the walk was officially opened. The Duke subsequently cemented his connection with the mountains when he spent 20 minutes on the platform of

Katoomba Station on 27 November 1934; a full 10 minutes longer than scheduled!

We paused for morning tea in a protected spot below a shallow overhang then made our way to Majestic Lookout, the first of many we would visit today. This spot gave a very different perspective of Leura Cascades. We were looking almost vertically down onto them; a sparkling ribbon lined with the luxuriant crowns of rainforest trees and, on the left hand side, cartwheels of Tree Fern fronds provided splashes of lighter green. On the other side of Leura Falls Creek the steel platform and access stairs to Bridal Veil View Lookout could be seen above the cliffs, cliffs of an orange hue in the muted light.

We then made our way through the enclosed area of Minnie's Grotto, moisture dripping from the rock overhangs, and climbed some old steel stairs to a drier environment; soon we took the track to Bridal Veil Lookout. A Mr Fitzgerald had obviously also taken this track and spent quite some time here, for writ large in the sandstone platform he had left his mark; well crafted upper case letters within a rectangular border. In the valley wisps of mist hung above the line of Leura Falls Creek and it could be seen that the clear area at the site of the old sewerage works is slowly shrinking as the bush regenerates. As suggested by the name there was a magnificent view of the Bridal Veil falling over the shoulders of the rounded rock face.

I am not one to visualise the form of living creatures in rock faces or on cliffs nor in cave formations; in fact I am the one who can rarely see such features even when others point them out. However (and you knew there had to be a however didn't you) along the track to Copelands Lookout we passed a wind-eroded rock face on the right of the track with jagged features; well worth a photo. There was one area which looked as though it may conceal a hole right through the rock. I turned to check when on the other side of the formation and sure enough there was a hole, a hole shaped like an eye. Above this eye-shaped hole was a furrowed brow; a nose, a mouth and a chin sat

below. The face of a gruff looking man staring into the valley. I wonder if anyone else saw it.

Copelands Lookout is named for Katoomba storekeeper William Reaburn Copeland (1855-1928); he discovered a path from Sublime Point into the Jamison Valley. Now known as Copeland Pass it is a very steep and rough track. This lookout, at the end of a cliff line which separates Linda Creek and Leura Falls Creek is a triangular shaped platform, its apex pointing to the valley; a low well-made stone wall runs along the cliff edge on two sides of the triangle. Spectacular views of Mount Solitary, framed by the cliffs on the eastern side of Katoomba and those below Sublime Point, were to be had from there.

Next on the list of vantage points was Fossil Rock Lookout. The 1884 Railway Guide to NSW mentions The Fossil Rock. This formation was thought to be the fossilised remains of some ancient creature by those with a vivid imagination - or those with a tourist business to promote. In 1952 the Blue Mountains Advertiser reported Council had decided that in future the feature be known as Rock of Antiquity to acknowledge the rock is not a fossil; a council directive that obviously got nowhere. I must admit that when you study this formation it is possible to see the humped back of a large body rising from the rock outcrop leading to a short curved tail and a flipper extending from one side; all you need is a vivid imagination.

Soon we were at Kiah Lookout, still part of the Prince Henry Cliff Walk even though we were now on Cliff Drive. Kiah is an Aboriginal word meaning 'beautiful place'. From this point we had a view of patches of mist floating in the Kedumba Valley and curling up from the Kedumba Walls; a clearing visible in the far valley was the Kedumba Camping Area, previously Maxwell's Farm. A short distance along Cliff Drive and we were back in the bush.

We crossed a small bridge which has been recently renewed and passed through an area populated by tall Tree Ferns. We took the track leading to Burrabaroo Lookout, the name

being Aboriginal for 'big fella stone' referring to the rock on which it is situated. This lookout has suffered an identity crisis with misspellings on various references and signs. It has been shown as Burralaroo and Burralaloo. The correct spelling of the name having been sorted perhaps the word 'Lookut' on the present sign should be looked at; maybe the sign maker thought he had used enough o's already. The view from here was along the line of Leura Falls Creek past Sublime Point; the long talus slope angling down from that point made a stark visual contrast to the horizontal line of Kings Tableland in the background.

Moving on we passed a tall Blue Mountains Ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*) growing with a substantial lean; long ribbons of discarded bark hung vertically from its smooth white trunk. We crossed a tiny stream, the Banksia Streamlet. It rises in Banksia Park and from our next stop, Banksia Lookout, can be seen leaping over the cliff edge and plummeting to a patch of bare rocks at the base of the cliffs. It then flows as the enchanting little rill we cross when walking through Leura Forest.

We took the steps down to the narrow viewing area at Honeymoon Point and continued on passing below the Honeymoon Lookout on Cliff Drive and arrived at a pair of lookouts which have not only suffered misspellings but have also been misplaced over the years.

Millamurra is an Aboriginal word for 'many eyes'; the rock formation at Millamurra Lookout has many openings, like eyes. Its close neighbour, Tallawalla Lookout, is named for the Aboriginal word meaning 'many trees'. The positions of these two lookouts have been transposed on various maps and brochures; they have also been misspelt as Millamulla, Minnamurra and Tallawarra.

At Tallawalla Lookout, which incidentally doesn't have a sign carrying **any** name at present, we found enough space and seating positions with magnificent views to settle down for lunch. From this spot there is a distant view back to both the Bridal Veil Falls

and the rather spectacular single drop of the Leura Falls below.

Following lunch we made our way up through Silver Mist Park to Cliff Drive (the track between Echo Point and The Three Sisters being closed for major refurbishment) and then on to Echo Point; here we joined the 'United Nations' crowd to take in the view. The tourists certainly struck the jackpot today.

Each of the many lookouts we had called into so far had presented us with views of ever changing light and shade, there was a manifest clarity and lack of haze in the landscape; the Echo Point views today were very special. A sea of mist lay in parts of the Jamison and Kedumba Valleys, forming inlets as it filled the gullies in the talus, fingers streamed up toward the cliffs of Kedumba Walls. The walls themselves were illuminated by brilliant sunshine while the cliffs and valley below Mount Solitary sat in shade. The Three Sisters sat brooding in a subdued light causing them to stand out in stark contrast to the sunlit background of Kings Tableland. A magnificent, haunting sight, the likes of which I have not experienced at this familiar place.

Our next stop along the walk was at Lady Darleys Lookout. She was the wife of Sir Frederick Darley; he was Lieutenant Governor of NSW in 1893, 1895, 1899 and 1900 to 1902. The Darleys built Lilianfels House, named after their daughter Lilian, in 1899 and had substantial land holdings in this area. This vantage point gave us an expansive view which included the Ruined Castle, our intended target for today.

Allambie Lookout was next along the track, Allambie being an Aboriginal word for 'quiet place', one could well rest here in quiet contemplation while taking in the central feature on show; Mount Solitary. The Aboriginal names of the lookouts we have visited today were suggested by William Faris Blakely (1876-1941) of the Royal Botanic Gardens who was commissioned to prepare a report for Council on the flora and geographical features along the Prince Henry Cliff Walk.

Cliff View Lookout gave us good views of Katoomba Falls; we then walked via Katoomba Cascades, which were flowing very well, to Reids Plateau. Named after George Houston Reid (1845-1918), NSW Premier 1894 to 1899 and Prime Minister from August 1904 to July 1905; it was known as Reids Platform prior to 1942, probably a more fitting description for this rather small area. Though small in size the views from here were extensive; Katoomba Falls, The Three Sisters, the expanse of the Jamison Valley, Kedumba Walls, Mount Solitary, Orphan Rock and Witches Leap were all on show from this short circular walk.

A short stroll delivered us back to our meeting point, the cars were recovered from Leura and a welcome hot cuppa ended what turned out to be a remarkable walk. The constantly changing light and shade, cloud and sunshine, oceans of mist and lucid views; unusual and very memorable images of the mountain landscape.

As we were about to head for home Freda Moxom arrived to say hello and catch up, she has not been able to join us for some time but hopes to be back in August; it was great to see you Freda.

Speaking of those missing in action, Peter Carr-Boyd recently rang Libby. Peter has been unable to join us lately due to health concerns but hopes to get back to walking soon. He sends best wishes to all, as indeed we do to you Peter, hope to see you back on the track in the not too distant future.

John Cardy

## OUR JULY WALK

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2015

**Two Enclosed Verdant Places, some Mysterious Holes and Panoramic Views**

**Mermaids Cave, the Mystery Holes and Coachwood Glen at Blackheath**

Two for the price of one this month and both are new venues for the Group. Two short walks with a car pool to the second after lunch. The first is only about 4km; the track

down is steep in places but generally quite good. The return out of the valley is via a track also used for mountain biking, it is a little steep with a couple of short rock scrambles but we will have plenty of time to take it at a very easy pace. The spectacle of Mermaids Cave is well worth the effort and the Mystery Holes on the ridge are rather fascinating. Following lunch we will take a short drive to Coachwood Glen for a walk through beautiful rainforest.

**Meet in Staveley Parade in Blackheath at 10.00am or at Merry Garth for a 9.20am departure.**

To reach Staveley Pde cross the railway line at Blackheath, turn left immediately into Station St and follow it past the Shipley Rd intersection, **do not turn right at that intersection**; Staveley Pde is only about 200 metres past that point (there is a No Through Road sign there).

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.**

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## FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> August – Waterfall Circuit, Woodford to Hazelbrook

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September – Mount Banks and Banks Wall

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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.**

**Friday 10<sup>th</sup> July at The Avenue (outside Fernhill)**

**Friday 14<sup>th</sup> August at Founders Corner**

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