
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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NOT IKARA RIDGE AT MOUNT VICTORIA

TOPIC

OUR NOVEMBER WALK

**PULPIT ROCK, LITTLE ZIG
ZAG, BUSHRANGERS
CAVE, RIENITS PASS and
WILSONS GLEN at MOUNT
VICTORIA**

Friday 20th November 2015

A mere four months ago our walk had to be cancelled because of deep snow across the landscape. Today our planned walk venue along an exposed ridge had to be changed because temperatures in the high thirties or low forties were predicted. Both walks touched by just two of the ever-changing moods of these mountains.

Sixteen walkers gathered at the pre-arranged meeting place on Victoria Falls Road where Libby explained the change of venue from the exposed Ikara Ridge to the more sheltered tracks on the southern side of Mount Victoria; we drove in convoy to the end of Kanimbla Valley Road.

Near the start of this walk we visited Pulpit Rock, one of nine natural features in these mountains (eight still existing) which have been given this name. Heavenly views are on offer when standing atop this Pulpit Rock.

Stretched out below us are the 'fighting fields' of the Kanimbla Valley; Kanimbla being an Aboriginal word meaning 'a big fight' or 'fighting field'. The clear grazing land of the



Summer in the Bush

valley floor, interspersed with tracts of woodland, is dotted with homesteads and farm dams presenting a serene bucolic scene. The cliffs below Mount Piddington and Hourn Point and, further afield, Mount Blackheath and the Shipley Plateau enclose the eastern side of the valley; to the west the ridge which carries the Jenolan Caves Road forms a natural boundary. In the south the view stretches across the course of the Coxs River to the mountains of the Kanangra Boyd National Park; two conical sugarloaf mounts below

Shipley Plateau add to the grandeur of the outlook.

We now begin the descent of the Little Zig Zag, a pass into the Kanimbla Valley constructed between 1875 and 1876, the dry stone terrace walling along the legs of the zigs and zags remains in remarkably good condition after one hundred and forty years.

At the sixth zig (or zag) there is a sign painted in blue on the cliff face indicating 'The North Track'. Here we climb down a rock face and follow The North Track for a short distance past a cliff on the right, then scramble up a slope, past a small level area retained by a low dry stone wall; we are at the entrance to Watchtower Cave. A tall triangular cleft recedes into the darkness; the floor of the cave rises steeply toward the rear. The 'Great Green Thing', a large smooth rock about five metres high and three metres wide dominates the

centre of the cave, a thin coating of lichen provides the green hue. The 'Great Green Thing' supports a jumbled pile of fallen rock. Bogon Moths have been known to occupy this cave in large numbers. The view back out to the bushland, framed by the tall narrow triangle of the entrance is rather special though no distant views are on offer, belying the Watchtower name. After spending some time in the pleasant coolness of this cave we make our way back to the main track, passing along the way a Lyrebird nest, a large tangle of sticks tucked onto a protected rock ledge.

At the next bend in the track we take a path off to the left, scramble down yet another steep rock face and make our way around to the Bushrangers Cave. This cave has been known by this name since about 1888, it was previously referred to as part of the Kanimbla Caves complex encompassing other caves and overhangs in the vicinity. An old flint lock tower musket, boot last, an auger, a gimlet, old clothing and parts of an 1822 Sydney newspaper with notices regarding four escaped prisoners were found in the cave by the son of a local farmer. No definitive evidence that bushrangers actually occupied the cave has been presented; evocative names such as this do no harm to the tourist trade however.

The climb into this cave has been made easier since our last visit with the installation of a short makeshift ladder. The cave is about twenty metres deep and the main chamber is about five metres high; there are several small offshoot passages. A formation known as The Wedding Cake has a thick layer of pure white soft sandstone topped with the more usual darker sandstone with ironstone banding; the softer white stone is obviously eroding much more quickly than the harder topping. Hanging from a sloping wall toward the back of the cave is what appears to be the nest of a Yellow-throated Scrubwren; they usually build their pendulous nests above a watercourse - perhaps this is a more reclusive bird.

We pause awhile for morning tea in the cool sheltered area below the cave entrance.

Back on the Little Zig Zag we continue downhill through eight more changes in direction passing along the way some wonderful examples of Black Wattle (*Callicoma serratifolia*) in full flower and *Goodenias* displaying bright yellow flowers with their distinctive three spreading lower lobes and two erect back lobes.

We then turn left onto Rienits Pass. This pass is named for Henry (Heinrich) Guenther Rienits who ran a very successful private school for boys at Mount Victoria; it was called simply 'The School'. He set the private school up after resigning from his posting at the public school following a disagreement with what he considered a very disagreeable school inspector. (He employed Henry Lawson's father, Peter Larsen, to build the school in Montgomery Street.) Rienits was very active in community affairs on various trusts and associations; he lobbied successfully for the road to Victoria Falls which was constructed in 1908. He died in 1928 and is buried in the Mount Victoria cemetery where hopefully they got the spelling of his name correct, unlike on some of the track signs here.

This pass initially takes us through a more sheltered yet still fairly open environment where the track is decorated with many examples of the Branching Grass Flag (*Libertia paniculata*) displaying their brilliant white six-petalled flowers, three large petals alternating with three smaller petals, held in clusters above strap-like leaves. Also present here are examples of the Spreading Flax Lily (*Dianella revoluta var revoluta*), its dark blue flowers with prominent yellow stamens providing a contrast to the pure white blossom of the Grass Flags.

Soon we enter the deeper shade of the rainforest and there is a welcome drop in temperature. Here many Soft Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) are unfurling an abundance of new fronds, elegantly coiled crosiers reaching up from among the older fronds, in some cases their soft green curled form silhouetted against the reds and golds of the sheer cliffs beyond. Along the creek line below the track large boulders and the prone

trunks of long-fallen trees are shrouded with moss and lichen.

The track zig zags up the steep slope, vines coil across the path and hang in loops above, easily entangling the unwary walker. The vegetation becomes more lush as we drop down to the upper reaches of the creek we saw far below us earlier. Mossy stepping stones take us across this small water course and we stop for lunch a few metres further on to take advantage of the cool environment below the thick protective canopy.

What a pleasant place this is to rest awhile in the cool stillness of the rainforest with a view through the understorey back toward the creek, occasional shafts of sunlight penetrating the canopy to illuminate patches of the forest floor. The experience was made even more agreeable with the knowledge that the enclosing atmosphere of the rainforest was sheltering us from the heat of that sun.

Rainforests - a place for the regeneration of soil, vegetation and the human spirit.

Shortly after moving on from our lunch stop we arrive at the rainforest margin. Here there is a good example of the effect of a changing environment. On the rainforest side of the margin there are several Grass Leaf Trigger Plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*) all carrying well-formed flower buds but with no showing of colour as yet. Only a few metres further on in the more open forest there are Grass Leaf Trigger Plants in full bloom displaying vivid pink flowers along their vertical stems; no unopened buds present at all.

The track now takes us to the top of the talus slope and tees into the track running in both directions along the base of the cliff line; we take the right hand track which leads to the Witches Glen Waterfall. The environment here is in total contrast to the gully we have just left, it is very dry; the spectacular cliffs above appear to form a rain shadow along the base of the cliff line.

The first moisture encountered is at the base of Witches Glen Waterfall. A small pool, several metres out from the base of the cliff, is fed by

the falls; beds of moss extend from the pool edge, a rather incongruous sight in the dry dusty surrounds.

There is only a very low rate of flow in the falls today yet the effect when standing at the base is rather special. A shower of glistening droplets cascades over the cliff edge and is wafted left and right by the gentle breeze, dispersing the droplets over a wide area as they plummet to ground; some do find their way into the small pool at the base.

We make our way back along the base of the cliffs and once more enter a cool enclosed place; we have reached Wilsons Glen. We cross a small creek and climb up into the shady gully to a point where the track divides; we turn left toward Pulpit Rock.

We are now in more open country but as the track skirts close to the south side of the hillside we are protected to a large degree from the heat of the day. We arrive at Bedes Lookout, a point on the end of a small ridge surfaced with red shale. The lookout is named for William Bede Dalley (1831 – 1888). Born to convict parents he rose to become a barrister, served in both houses of the New South Wales parliament and was the first Australian to be appointed to the Privy Council. He is honoured with a memorial statue in Hyde Park and a stained glass window and plaque in St Mary's Cathedral. Magnificent views into the Kanimbla Valley and across to the sheer cliffs near Bushrangers Cave and those below Hourn Point are to be had from here.

Continuing on we pass some impressive rock overhangs, one carrying a triangular cluster of Rock Sprengelia (*Sprengelia monticola*) displaying many pure white star-like flowers, and climb the stone stairs which deliver us back to Pulpit Rock to complete the circuit.

Ikara Ridge or The Little Zig Zag? At times unplanned, and perhaps unwanted but necessary changes, result in good experiences; this walk was a case in point, a very pleasant cool alternative to the heat of Ikara Ridge.

John Cardy

OUR DECEMBER WALK**Friday 18th December 2015****Spectacular Cliffs, Large Caverns, a Mossy Fern-filled Glen and a Natural Stone Arch****Dargans Arch at Dargan**

This is a new venue for the group. The short morning walk is only about 3km return with a descent and subsequent ascent of about 110 metres; just enough to help build an appetite for the end of year Christmas luncheon awaiting back at Merry Garth. (See details below.) There will be a car pool organised at Merry Garth for the drive to Sandham Road at Dargan.

Meet at Merry Garth for a 9.00am departure. Please indicate your willingness to provide a vehicle for the car pool when booking in.

Although the walk is quite short there will be an opportunity to explore the caverns and glen below the arch; alternatively you may choose to simply enjoy the view of this spectacular feature from above.

Bring morning tea only, lunch awaits at Merry Garth

Should you be bringing food for the luncheon, Libby has suggested it may be dropped off to the kitchen at Merry Garth before we leave for the walk.

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 ring after the evening of Wednesday 16th December.

END OF YEAR / CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Thanks once again to the generous hospitality of Libby and Keith the end of year luncheon will be held in the glorious grounds of Merry Garth. **Ex-walkers, armchair walkers, family and friends are more than welcome.**

Meet for lunch at 12.30pm.

A format similar to last year will be used, that is BBQ Chicken and Ham, Dessert, Tea and Coffee will be provided.

Please bring one item only from the following selection **to share**: Salads, hot savoury dishes that go with the chicken and ham which is provided or a dessert slice; or you may elect to pay \$10 per person and just come and enjoy.

Please bring your own plates, cutlery, glasses and drinks.

To assist with catering please advise Helen Cardy (9871 3661 or 0418 646 487) AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE if you are coming and, to avoid over and/or under supply, which of the shared food you would prefer to bring or if you wish to make the \$10 donation.

CAROL SERVICE

The annual Carol Service will be held at St Georges Church Mt Wilson commencing at 7.30pm on Sunday 20th December. Everyone is very welcome to attend this service and experience the ambience of this historic church in a charmingly different light.

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 15th January 2016 – Matthies Track, Waterfall Creek, The Throne at Mt Wilson

Friday 19th February 2016 – Mermaid Cave and the Mystery Holes at Blackheath

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.

11th December - meet at Wynne Reserve

8th January – meet at Wynne Reserve

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 for details