
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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MOUNT WILSON TO MOUNT IRVINE

TOPIC

OUR OCTOBER WALK

SMITHS HILL, THE
RUNNERS TRACK,
SCRIVENER PASS, DANES
WAY - MT WILSON to MT
IRVINE

Friday 16 October 2015

At 7pm on the 11th May 1962 a switch attached to the side of the Scrivener house, 'Kookootonga', at Mount Irvine was thrown to the 'ON' position. The resulting simultaneous illumination of all of the house lights, strings of coloured lights around the eaves, and floodlights to bathe the lawns and trees in a soft glow, transformed the scene; electricity supply had arrived at Mount Irvine.

Today we will follow part of the route the power line took to deliver this major change in the lives of the Mount Irvine residents.

Magic happens at Mount Wilson. Eleven walkers arrived outside 'Wollangambe', Wendy Holland's lovely property in Farrer Road West for this walk, sufficient cars having been left at our finishing point at 'Carisbrook' in Danes Way at Mount Irvine to ferry us all back here this afternoon, their drivers having been transported back to this point - magic. The magician of course is Libby whose skills in organising these car shuffles never fail; nor fail to amaze.



Spring in the Bush

Wendy bids us farewell as we make our way past towering Blaxland's Stringybarks (*Eucalyptus blaxlandii*) and Blue Mountains Ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*) and head down Smiths Road; evidence of the October 2013 fires is still on show but the bushland is well advanced on its usual regeneration cycle. We climb the steep little pinch to the top of Smiths Hill; at an elevation of nine hundred and thirty six metres, extensive views are on offer stretching into the far-off haze.

In the distance to the north, the slightly flattened yet rounded outline of a mountain can be seen profiled in that haze; it looms above the intervening landscape. Possibly Mount Mistake but perhaps I am mistaken.

We amble back down the hill and take the track which runs along the boundary of the 'Gowan Ross' property. This leads us from open woodland into a pocket of dense rainforest containing Coachwood (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*) and Sassafras (*Doryphora sassafras*); thick woody vines snake across the forest floor and climb into the canopy seeking the energy of the sun. As we approach a creek line there are Cedar Wattles (*Acacia elata*) on the margin of the rainforest. At that small creek there is a dam wall just inside the fence line; a basalt structure built in 1967 by the late Bill Smart, then owner of the property, and his brother, the late Hugh Smart.

As we begin to climb away from the creek we are once more in open woodland; the trunk of a fallen woodland giant provides convenient seating on which to pause for morning tea.

Following our short repast we continue on to Farrer Road East, close to its junction with Mount Irvine Road. Near this point we divert left and move onto the powerline easement. Libby explains that the easement was cleared by Peter and Tom Kirk of Mount Wilson; they also erected some of the poles and assisted with the stringing of the conductors.

A short distance down the hill a track on the right leads us away from the easement; this is part of the Runners Track, used when the Mount Wilson to Bilpin Fun Run was an annual event raising funds for the Rural Fire Service. This very popular event had to be abandoned when the Bowens Creek Bridge was closed.

We are now in open forest and the fallen blossom of Mistletoe (*Amyema* sp) decorates the track; filaments of bright red scattered along the path and beside the track.

Waratahs (*Telopea speciosissima*) abound. Their generic name may well be from the Greek for 'seen from afar' as indeed they are; crimson spheres dot the hillsides. What a delight it is however when they are 'seen close at hand'. Densely packed clusters of tiny globular-tipped flowers forming a spectacular orb which nestles in a saucer of bright red bracts. How fortunate we are to have so many close-up encounters today. The magnificent Waratah, the name Aboriginals used for this 'red-flowering tree'.

Contrasting with the large red globes of the Waratahs is another globular but smaller flower; the bright yellow blossom of the Broad-leaf Drumstick (*Isopogon anemonifolius*). Peeping out from among the groundcover are many examples of the Black-eyed Susan (*Tetradlea rubioides*); four deep pink petals surrounding the dark central 'eye'. Lower in the gully Black Wattles (*Callicoma serratifolia*) are putting on new growth; soft velvety bronze-coloured leaves contrasting markedly with the dark green of the more

mature foliage. At this time blossom is just developing on the Callicomas, tufted globes of fine filaments from which the generic name derives; the Greek kalos, beautiful; kome, hair.

The track now leads us to the base of a rock outcrop where Dragons Tails (*Dracophyllum secundum*) grow against the wind-sculpted wall. We climb to the top of this outcrop which provides a great view back along the powerline. The narrow swath of the easement cut through the bushland leads the eye over the olive green/grey of the native evergreen forest to the bright greens, golds and reds of the exotic deciduous trees in the gardens of 'Lindfield Park' and 'Gowen Ross' displaying their new spring apparel. A glance over the edge of this outcrop reveals a cluster of six Waratahs; crimson globes held aloft on vertical shafts.

We continue the climb up the hill encountering along the way examples of the Purple Damperia (*Damperia purpurea*), their large purple petals surrounding a yellow centre. An occasional Dotted Sun Orchid (*Thelymitra ixioides*) is spotted beside the track; light blue petals carrying darker blue dots, mainly on the upper petals. Maintaining the blue theme, at ground level there are examples of the Slender Violet (*Hybanthus monopetalus*) displaying tiny blue flowers that appear to be single-petalled; they do carry other petals but they are minute.

At the crest of the hill there is a maze of fire trails and powerline access tracks but Libby once more weaves her magic and leads us in the appropriate direction. Though it is relatively early Libby suggests we divert to a rather special spot for lunch and leads us toward Mount Irvine Road. A short walk west along this road, we divert to the left and arrive at a rock platform on the edge of a high cliff; we are at the little known Picnic Point. This vantage point affords a sweeping view across Bowens Creek, it stretches from east of Berambing, past Mount Tomah to west of Mount Bell while closer at hand, off to the right, the home at 'Fields Selection' sits alone, nestled into the bushland on the hillside above Zircon Creek. There is a wonderfully gnarled

Old Man Banksia (*Banksia serrata*) on this rock platform appearing to grow from an impossibly small amount of soil. A Cedar Wattle towers up from below the cliff, its mass of light cream young emerging leaves providing a distinctive display against the dark green of the older foliage.

We settle here for lunch under a clear blue sky looking across to the Botanic Gardens at Mount Tomah. With the benefit of a zoom lens people can be seen looking our way from the viewing platform of the Visitor Centre; people in two very different situations enjoying views in opposite directions of the vast mountain landscape.

Heading back across Mount Irvine Road to the maze of tracks from whence we came we pass examples of the Guinea Flower (*Hibbertia saligna*) displaying their brilliant yellow blossom. Purple Flags or Native Iris (*Patersonia sp*) are also present holding aloft their three-petalled pennants and peeking out from the leaf litter are a smattering of flowers of the Ivy-leaved Violet (*Viola hederacea*), their tiny white-fringed violet-centred flowers standing out against the fallen eucalypt leaves.

At the point where Libby takes a right turn there is an amazing display of Waratahs, a trio of magnificent blooms clustered close together on stems no more than 30cm high; a wonderful sight. We are now dropping down the slope behind 'Touri', the property of a fellow walker and member of this group, Sara Sernack. We pass a large rock outcrop on the left beside which a group of Tall Everlasting or White Paper Daisy (*Helichrysum elatum*) grows, clusters of their yellow-centred brilliant white starburst flowers are held high.

We continue through beautiful open forest, walking adjacent to the 'Touri' fence line and emerge onto Mount Irvine Road close to the point where Scrivener Pass diverts to the right off the road. This was once the route of Mount Irvine Road and one wonders why the line of the road was changed in the 1960s from this easier grade path to the much steeper present route. Along this Pass we come to a point where rubbish was once dumped over the edge

of the road; an act which would be considered outrageous today, yet was quite common before the advent of organised rubbish collection. Rusting car bodies, farm equipment and household goods lie scattered down the hillside. I guess that, as with names and dates carved into rock faces, which often transmute from graffiti to historical artefacts with the passage of time, this present blot on the landscape may become an archaeological dig in the distant future, revealing details of the lifestyle of the founders of Mount Irvine.

More pleasant sights along this path include the showy large red flowers of the Dusky Coral Pea (*Kennedia rubicunda*) which is twining its way through host shrubs and along fallen tree trunks. (The generic name for this robust climber is for L Kennedy (1775-1818), a London nurseryman, one of the earliest cultivators and suppliers of Australian plants in Britain.) Also present are scattered examples of the mauve flowers of the Mint Bush (*Prostanthera sp*) and on a leaf of one such bush sits an exquisite tiny beetle, glossy bronze body rimmed and spotted with gold and carrying fine black antennae.

Soon we emerge back onto Mount Irvine Road and begin the climb up Danes Way through imposing tall forest, once more passing below the powerline. Presently we reach the tiny cemetery where many members of founding families of this area now lie; an eminently appropriate, quiet resting place, with its sloping aspect toward the course of the Wollangambe River.

A further kilometre or so and the cars to transport us back to our start point magically appear, parked outside 'Carisbrook'. The Smart family developed this property, from about 1939, as a market garden and nursery. Sadly, the October 2013 fires destroyed the family home they ultimately built on this site.

Back in Farrer Road West, Wendy Holland kindly invites us into her beautiful garden to partake of our usual after walk cuppa. What a pleasant way to end a day spent exploring the back tracks and byways of Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine. Relaxing in such a sublime

environment and enjoying the magnificent northerly views, through a window in the exotic plantings at 'Wollangambe', across the rugged spectacle of the Blue Mountains and Wollemi National Parks; many thanks for your kind hospitality Wendy.

Today we have seen just a small section of the difficult country the power line to Mount Irvine had to traverse. During the afternoon, prior to that symbolic 'throwing of the switch' at Mount Irvine fifty-three years ago, two of the heads of departments involved in the project were given a Land Rover tour of part of the route. They were to be shown the rough terrain that had to be negotiated during construction; this was amply demonstrated when the Land Rover became bogged, forcing the termination of the tour. The driver of that Land Rover was a cherished bushwalking friend of this group - the late Bill Smart. Bill first came to Mt Irvine at the age of about 14 to work with his father in clearing the land and establishing the market gardens and nursery at the 'Carisbrook' property.

(Information regarding the coming of the electricity supply to Mount Irvine was gleaned from the publication "Mount Irvine – a History".)

John Cardy

OUR NOVEMBER WALK

Friday 20th November 2015

Ikara Ridge off Victoria Falls Road at Mt Victoria

This is a relatively easy walk of about 8 kms return with lots of wildflowers and great views. The group last walked this track in November 2010.

Meet at Merry Garth for a 9.00am departure or at Victoria Falls Road just off the Western Highway, about 1km east of Mt Victoria, at 9.30am. A vehicle rationalisation will be made at the Victoria Falls Road meeting point.

Contact Libby Raines, on 4756 2121 (after 7pm) or Helen & John Cardy on 9871 3661 or on mobile 0418 646 487.

Bring lunch, morning and afternoon tea and plenty of water.

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 18th December 2015 – Dargan Arch at, where else, but Dargan - followed by the end of year Christmas luncheon at Merry Garth.

Friday 15th January 2016 – A Mt Wilson Ramble.

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 13th November - Wynne Reserve

Friday 11th December - Wynne Reserve

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 for details

