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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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## THE TESSELLATED PAVEMENTS

## TOPIC

### OUR JANUARY WALK

THE TESSELLATED  
PAVEMENTS at Mt IRVINE

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2015

‘I like work: it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours.’ So said English writer Jerome K Jerome in 1889. Jerome would have been fascinated if he accompanied us on our walk today for there was just a little work waiting to be done. The fires of October 2013 had swept along the ridge running out to the Tessellated Pavements and Libby felt there may well be some track clearing work necessary.

Sixteen willing walking workers gathered at the Cathedral Reserve where a vehicle rationalisation was organised by Libby for the drive out to Mt Irvine. And what a lovely drive that is, especially so as a passenger. Then you can fully appreciate the enclosing rainforest which clads the extremely steep hillsides along the way, then the tall open forest, verdant farmland and views across toward Mt Tomah and Bilpin and rainforest once again as we approach our destination. Many thanks to Libby, Martin, Fred and John for kindly providing the transport.

Libby led us to the start of the now indistinct walking track and it was decided a cairn would be helpful to guide walkers onto the



Summer in the Bush

correct path. This was quickly completed and we headed off along the ridge. It was gratifying to see how well the bush was recovering from the fire; trunks and large branches wearing feathered coats of foliage emerging from adventitious buds activated by that fire.

Those at the front of the group with Libby cleared debris off the track line and dealt with vegetation intruding onto the path. I was in my usual position at the rear of the group and teamed up with the Bearup & Meade consortium in clearing

heavier burnt branches and logs and inspecting the numerous stone cairns those in front had been constructing, modifying where necessary to add just a touch of a professional finish. (I liked your cairns Freda; it was them – John C)

Soon we diverted left to a rock outcrop for morning tea. Here we had a view across Morley Creek to the fire-ravaged hillside; the skeletal form of burnt trees silhouetted on the skyline. Closer at hand was an old Banksia, badly charred but not giving up the fight; a few clusters of new foliage emerged from blackened bark. On the same tree numerous seedpods hung, charred follicles agape revealing light tan unburnt interiors from which pairs of seeds had been expelled. Between the rocks there were several tiny seedlings emerging; each with three or four glossy green finely-toothed leaves. Should the parent tree lose its fight for survival its

offspring will be there to replace it. Should the parent fully recover and overshadow the seedlings many will weaken and perish; such is life in the natural environment.

Continuing on we passed several fire-sculpted tree trunks. One had been burnt right through forming a vertically elongated frame for the shrubbery beyond. Another, obviously burnt in previous fire(s) for the cambium had rolled quite extensively over the burnt edges, had been re-singed by this fire, its hollowed dead wood a charred mosaic; a single cicada had chosen to settle on this trunk to emerge from its shell which now stood out brilliantly against the black background.

As we progressed the track clearing continued apace. Freda suggested she had been working so industriously she was developing calluses on her gloved hands. Not to be outdone Bob Bearup declared the tools he was using had been worn down to at least half their original length and I have never known Bob to exaggerate.

We arrived at a small saddle where numerous Sydney Red Gum or Coastal Apple (*Angophora costata*) were thriving. Having recently shed their bark their cream to orange newly exposed trunks rose from mats of a similar colour formed by the discarded bark; a wonderful sight.

In this area a faint footpad veered off to the right; some near the front took this sidetrack. Fortuitous as it turned out for they discovered a cluster of Bonnet Orchids or Tartan Tongue Orchids (*Cryptostylis erecta*), their large hooded flowers displaying an intriguing pattern of reddish-brown stripes. A little further on we spotted the first of many Flannel Flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*) we were to see today; this one had a tiny black insect feeding on the central flower head, highlighted against the pure white velvety bracts.

Soon we diverted to the right to a rock platform which afforded views across Bowens Creek to the verdant fields of the Itchenstoke property on Mount Tootie and Little Tootie; an old property which is at present being divided up and sold.

We now descended from Tesselate Hill (no idea why there is a missing 'l' in that map name) through the remnants of what was very thick and tall heath prior to the fire and emerged onto the Tessellated Pavements. This large platform, some areas tessellated but many sections not, is an intriguing place. There are many shallow pools, dry at this time, yet the layers of silt reveal many sharpening grooves; the deeper silt in the grooves still being moist makes them stand out in comparison to the dry thinner surrounding deposits of silt.

This was obviously a special oft-used place for Aboriginal inhabitants. As well as the numerous sharpening grooves there is, near the northern edge of the platform, an engraving of a female figure. From previous visits to this site I was aware that in bright sunshine this figure was difficult to discern. Consequently I brought a length of woollen yarn with me to lay in the engraved outline to accentuate it. (A method that, importantly, does not harm the engraving, which I learnt from Eugene Stockton and John Merriman's book 'Blue Mountains Dreaming'.)

We paused for lunch at this rather spectacular spot, taking in the magnificent views across the wild rugged country; country deeply divided by the tortuous paths of the Wollangambe River and Bowens Creek. Along with the wider views there were intriguing features closer at hand. A thin ironstone shelf below the main platform took on the shape of a gently curling wave and nearby a large boulder carrying the tessellated pattern resembled a giant tortoise shell.

The return to the cars was a doddle on the now cleared track; Libby was delighted with the work done and wishes to offer profuse thanks to everyone for their sterling effort.

The last word goes to Jerome K Jerome: "It is impossible to enjoy idling thoroughly unless one has plenty of work to do."

John Cardy

**The Boronia Point Walk in December**

Owing to my verbosity with the review of the walks of 2014 in the last newsletter, there was limited space remaining; this allowed only an abridged version of Libby's report on the Boronia Point walk to be included. In writing the report for this month I have managed to curb my circumlocution and here is Libby's full, unabridged, unexpurgated story of that December walk:

The walk along the Galwey Lane at the back of the properties Campanella, Linden and New Bywood is always interesting with many Coachwood (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*) and Banksia (*Banksia integrifolia ssp monticola*) growing very tall; here too are a number of Possum Wood (*Quintinia sieberi*) which start their life on a tree fern, eventually killing it and becoming a large rough-barked tree.

Behind Jamine and Wildenstein we walked along beside the fences with the thick rainforest on our right. We stopped near a little track which wound down between the trees to a small dam collecting water in a small charming tree fern filled gully. The dam was built by Tom and Peter Kirk in the 1960s when they cleared the land nearby for Sir John Austin who also owned Dennarque at the time. The land was cleared so racehorses could come here from the stables near Angus Banks. However the horses never came to Mt Wilson so after using the land for Simmental cattle for a few years the land was sold, dividing it into five large blocks. Now these properties have been planted into beautiful gardens with spacious and elegant homes. The dam is still in use.

We continued around Wildenstein through the 'Mount Wilson Daisies' which were thriving here and growing thickly, then across a small stone culvert (a good way to use unwanted rock) and around Bryn Mawr along the slashed track through the Cathedral Reserve.

Here we sadly said farewell to John and Helen Cardy who had to leave us. Helen had organised the lunch for us, purchasing and cutting the ham and turkey and buying some of the desserts. On Thursday she and John had come up and we collected the chairs and tables

from the Church and Fire Station, put them in place and clothed the trees and surrounding plants with Christmas decorations.

We continued on up through the rainforest on the southern side of Lambs Hill to the fire trail and down beneath the power lines to the Happy Valley picnic area.

Here we paused for a little more history of the area and to admire the magnificent stand of Blue Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*) growing there, before walking along the northern side of Caleys Haycock along the old Mount Irvine Road, locally known as 'Arkenstalls'. During the 1950s the road was altered to go around the southern side of Caleys Haycock and through the main forest where there was a delightful walking track. The old road, which has lovely distant views to the north, became the 'Tip Road' where locals tipped their rubbish over the cliff for some years before the Council provided a garbage collection for Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine. The remains of old tanks, roofing iron, wire, bottles and tins can be seen far below, where it is gradually being reclaimed by vegetation which was burnt by the fires, making it all much more visible again; not a great part of the Mount Wilson history.

We were impressed, when we walked along the first part of the fire trail out to Boronia Point, by the tremendous regrowth of vegetation since the fires, even on the road itself. The trunks of the trees were still fuzzy with the new leaves sprouting all the way up. Great clumps of *Pultenaea* with its soft green leaves, Native Indigo (*Indigofera australis*) with its many soft blue-green leaves, *Pomaderris* with large soft leaves and yellow clusters of flowers, Black Wattle (*Calicoma serratifolia*), a distinctive shrub with very serrated leaves, shiny green above and pale grey beneath, various *Acacia* and many other plants growing as fast as they can on the better soil.

We were soon out on the ridge with its poor sandstone soil and different environment. Sun streamed through the thin canopy of scattered

trees and the regrowth of vegetation was pushing through the soil making small shrubs, most not flowering this year. A few Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea sp*) their tall straight flower heads just finishing, Tea Tree (*Leptospermum sp*), Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*), Grevillea, Banksia and Heath Epacris, yellow Drumstick (*Isopogon anemonifolius*), the Purple Flag or Native Iris (*Patersonia sp*) and the cheerful white-faced Flannel Flower (*Actinotus helianthi*) always one of the first plants to flower following a fire. Next year the flowers of all these plants and many others will be prolific, as there is so much light and sunshine before the canopy grows back again.

The great cliffs of the Wollangambe River appeared and we could see the huge double S bends of the river and the great cliffs gleaming in the sunshine.

The vegetation here was slower to recover from the fires, the Pink Boronia (*Boronia floribunda*), the large flowered Tea Tree (*Leptospermum macrocarpum*) and Banksia were tiny mounds of leaves at the base of the burnt stems. The rare *Hakea constablei* could be recognised by the burnt large seed heads hanging from the charred stems.

We enjoyed morning tea in this glorious place with the great cliffs all around us, the blue blue sky above and the tree-clad slopes leading down to those cliffs.

The day was heating up as the sun beat down on the open ridge top so we slowly made our way back up to the cars for a welcome ride back to Merry Garth; there that delicious lunch awaited us. We were met by more friends from the group and we all enjoyed the afternoon in the deep shade beneath the trees in the garden.

Libby Raines

Many thanks for that insightful account Libby, giving us the benefit of your extensive local knowledge and familiarity with the bushland of the mountains.

## OUR FEBRUARY WALK

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2015

**Indigenous Rock Art, Stunning Views,  
Perhaps a Glimpse of Indiana Jones**

**Blackfellows Hand Rock to the Temple of  
Doom on the Newnes Plateau**

This is a new venue for the group. The relatively easy walk of about 7 kilometres is a wonderful combination of Aboriginal rock art, open forest, a shady gully, precipitous cliffs with panoramic views and a wonderful array of sculptured pagodas; a walk not to be missed.

There will be a vehicle rationalisation at our meeting point at Lithgow for the 23 kilometre drive, on sealed roads, to our start point.

Meet at 9.30am in the Coles Car Park (Bent Street or St Patrick's Primary School end) of the Lithgow Valley Shopping Centre or at Merry Garth at 8.55am for a 9.00am 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.**

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## FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2015 – Evans Lookout, Junction Rock, Govetts Leap Lookout

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2015 – National Pass and Valley of the Waters at Wentworth Falls

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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.**

**13<sup>th</sup> February 2015 at Wynne Reserve**

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