
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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WOODFORD TO HAZELBROOK

TOPIC

OUR AUGUST WALK

**THE WATERFALL CIRCUIT
from WOODFORD to
HAZELBROOK**

Friday 21st August 2015

A sly grog shop, heavenly bodies, a treasure chest of gold, chimerical convicts, a fleeting fairy, a life lost in the first world war, a dairy farm; an eclectic list indeed yet this walk is touched in some way by each of the above. Why not tag along as we walk through delightful terrain and a little history.

Perhaps as compensation for the heavy snow which caused the cancellation of our last walk, Mother Nature has blessed us with glorious weather today; bright sunshine and not a breath of wind. Fourteen walkers gather at Hazelbrook and Libby soon has us organised into three vehicles for a car shuffle to our starting point at Woodford.

On this car shuffle we pass the Woodford Academy, a property which has a chequered past. It has been a licensed inn under several names, a guesthouse, post office, private hospital, boarding school (which was when it gained the title 'Academy') and private residence. The first establishment on the site however was a sly grog shop run from a dwelling built illegally in about 1828. It was in 1867 that it first became a private residence when Sydney jeweller and businessman Alfred



Spring in the Bush

Fairfax purchased the property. He named it Woodford House after the town in which he was born in Essex; this was the genesis of the locality name. Alfred had two daughters; the first two waterfalls we are to visit today were named after them; Mabel Falls and Edith Falls.

We make our way into open woodland and though it is still late winter the bush is beginning to take on that feel and scent of summer. The trail leads us downhill to our first side track; the path to Mabel Falls. Here several thin strands

of water, glistening in the morning sun, drop into a reflective pool surrounded by ferns. These falls are near the headwaters of Woodford Creek which feeds into Lake Woodford. The water flowing out of the pool courses over some dressed sandstone blocks, other blocks are scattered in the area, some act as stepping-stones across a boggy section of track nearby. These blocks once formed the wall of a deeper pool at these falls and it is often referred to as the convict pool; no connection to convicts exists however, another of the many fanciful historical myths which seem to breed in these mountains.

Back on the main track we take advantage of the seating provided by the smooth trunks of a couple of fallen trees and pause for morning tea. What a wondrous place to rest awhile. Before us, framed by smooth white tree trunks, the eucalypt-clad hillside providing an

olive-green background, is a field of brilliant yellow wattle blossom; an overflowing treasure chest of gold.

We continue on, skirt around several large fallen trees and cross Woodford Creek via a newly constructed causeway which replaces a small bridge deemed unsafe some time ago. Near a fire trail, above Edith Falls, the bush is reclaiming the remains of a large, well-constructed fireplace indicating that visitation to this area was much higher in the past.

A sidetrack swings sharply back and takes us steeply down past a rock overhang, where there is a noticeable drop in temperature, to deliver us to the base of Edith Falls. Here a curtain of water initially drops vertically over the cliff edge before cascading down a series of steps in the coppery-coloured rock face, settles momentarily in an elevated saucer-shaped pool before dropping into a sandy-bottomed rock pool at the base. We take in the beauty of this dell and return to the main track.

We bid farewell to the Fairfax sisters and head toward the third of the nine waterfalls on this circuit – Hazel Falls. It has been misconstrued by some that Hazel was a third sister but these falls are named after the locality of Hazelbrook. They were originally named Fairy Falls but that was a fleeting fame for the fairies; the name was changed to avoid confusion with falls of that name at Lawson.

The track, which leads to these falls, takes us past some unusual rock outcrops having horizontal ledges coated with smooth-surfaced bluish-grey lichen. A bridge takes us across the lower portion of a hanging swamp where Pouched Coral Fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*) rises in a large light green swath up the slope above the bridge. Many wattles decorate this track, the large deep yellow globular flowers of the Hedgehog Wattle (*Acacia echinula*) light up the scene with their brilliance. The showy wattles are complemented by the delicate *Leucopogon setiger*, tiny bell-shaped white flowers hanging in their hundreds below the fine stems of this exquisite Beard-heath.

Soon the track takes us down into a shady sheltered gully at the head of which are Hazel

Falls. The path initially leads us behind the falls; we peer through watery drapes to the mossy boulders and tall straight trunks of trees reaching out of the gully to seek the energy of the sun. A scramble downstream to obtain a full view of the falls reveals a single drop from the rock ledge high above, fanning out as they descend to form a curtain in front of the deep overhang at their base.

We take the path out of this gully, which initially rises in the direction from whence we have come, but swings to emerge onto a fire trail. A short distance along this trail we cross the creek upstream of Hazel Falls. It never fails to surprise how such a small flow of water in a creek can result in such a wonderful display at a waterfall.

The fire trail / transmission line maintenance road delivers us to the Woodford Lake access road; here we have a choice. Follow the Woodford Lake road loop, a distance of about seven kilometres, to the start of the Hazelbrook phase of this walk, or opt to follow an indistinct track across an adjacent gully, a distance of about three quarters of a kilometre; we decide on the latter.

The signage (the BMCC, to their credit, has installed many new signs along this walk) states it is 1.8 km to Burgess Falls, the first of the six Falls on the Hazelbrook phase of this walk. We set off down the track which initially follows close by the boundary of a private property; the large resident hound greets us with a husky but friendly sounding bark. A large showing of the Bush Pea (*Pultenaea* sp) illuminates the terrain here; brilliant yellow petals and reddish-orange keels on the myriad of flowers provide a fine display. Presently we arrive at a rocky outcrop with ample seating and a choice of sun or shade; we pause here for lunch.

Rested and refreshed, sustained by a piece of Libby's bushwalker cake, we continue down the slope. In this area there are examples of the Golden Prickly Wattle (*Acacia brownii*), golden yellow flower balls arising singly from the axils of its stiff pointed 'leaves'. The pleasant rippling sound of the waters of

Burgess Falls Creek, a tributary of Hazelbrook Creek, are soon heard and we cross this stream at the site of Diggers Bridge, a wooden structure which succumbed to bushfire and flood once stood here; it was never replaced. This site is just upstream of Burgess Falls, named in honour of Lance Corporal Edward Allen Burgess, a well-respected local, who lost his life at Ploegsteert Wood, Belgium on 3rd June 1917.

The track taking us down to Burgess Falls passes a plaque installed above a shelter cave on 7th October 1918 honouring Edward Burgess. These falls drop into a lush fern-filled glen; tumble over a rock shelf before a final drop into a sandy pool. The water then disappears below ground, re-emerging in the creek line downstream where it continues in a series of tiny cascades and eddies among the moss-clad rocks.

We now follow the creek line downstream through an enchanting gully of green. The cool moist microclimate in this verdant neck of the woods, created by the deep-sided gully and the enclosing canopy of the many trees which tower above the creek, results in a captivating environment sumptuously decorated with ferns, mosses and lichens; stunningly beautiful. Shafts of sunlight spear through the scant breaks in the canopy; light beams which bounce off the tiny pools and rippling water of the creek.

We swing left at the junction of Burgess Falls and Hazelbrook Creeks; we are now walking upstream and the track rises higher above the creek. Below us huge angular boulders straddle the creek line, the pleasant sound of small waterfalls and cascades can be heard but only glimpses of the water are to be had as the creek finds a path around and under these imposing tors. Moss-encrusted trunks of fallen forest giants lie on the slopes; we negotiate under or over more recently fallen titans of the forest on the way to the next waterfall.

Oaklands Falls, at the flow rate existing today, consists of three distinct translucent curtains of water, each leaping from the lip of a rock overhang which forms a deep cavern behind

these watery drapes. They fall in a single drop onto large dark boulders at their base; an impressive sight whether viewed front on or from within the gloom of the cavern looking out through the sparkling curtains. These falls take their name from Oaklands Farm, a dairy that was once situated near where we first met this morning; it was subdivided in 1914 and marketed as Oaklands Estate.

We encounter an unusual sight as we make our way toward the next waterfall. Ray Nesci spots some mistletoe, certainly not unusual in itself, but these particular parasites are growing not far above ground level, on the smooth trunk of a large eucalypt rather than high in the canopy as is usual. Nature is full of surprises; well spotted Ray.

From the track, one hundred metres or so upstream of Oaklands Falls, the next waterfall, Lena Falls, can be heard, unfortunately that is the only liaison we will have with Lena. Helen and I checked out these Falls a few weeks ago and there is no easy way to get a view of them; a glimpse through the shrubbery of some falling water was the only 'view' to be had. In the announcement for this walk I did say there were nine waterfalls along the way, I didn't say we would actually get to see them all; like politicians' promises, some announcements require a forensic reading.

The origin of the name for Lena Falls is of particular interest to this group. They are named after Helena (Lena) Dorothea Russel nee Adams; her father, Fred Adams, was a member of the Hazelbrook Sights Reserve Trust. At 18 years of age she was the Loyalty Parade Queen in WW1. She was postmistress at Hazelbrook and later at Mount Wilson.

As the sounds of the unsighted Lena Falls fade in the background we make our way toward Horseshoe Falls. These Falls have suffered an identity crisis. They were initially named Horseshoe Falls circa 1903, in 1970 the Geographical Names Board renamed them Lyrebird Falls to avoid confusion with the Horseshoe Falls near Govetts Leap. However there was already a Lyrebird Falls higher upstream and confusion seems still to reign;

the signage at, and to, these falls indicates Horseshoe while the topographical map has the names transposed. A map by Jim Smith shows them as Horseshoe Falls downstream and Lyrebird Glen Falls upstream and who am I to argue with him?

Despite the nomenclature confusion the Falls are very attractive; an initial vertical drop followed by a cascade down a sloping cliff face and twin vertical drops at the face of a deep cavern onto dark almost black boulders at the base; quite stunning. I have previously stated I am not one to see animate features in cliffs or rocks, beside one of these dark boulders however is an image of a man's head; jutting chin, flattened nose, even curly blonde hair. Surely everyone can see that!

A track just below Horseshoe Falls, built in 1916 - 17, leads over a ridge to an adjacent branch of the creek where Glow Worm Nook Falls are situated; an attractive small waterfall flowing down dark cliffs. Glow worms can still be seen in this little nook.

And so on to the ninth waterfall, Lyrebird Glen Falls. These falls drop in a series of steps onto a sloping rock face, cascade down to shallow rock pools before flowing on to a pair of swirl pools in the bedrock further downstream; a delightful way to end the Woodford to Hazelbrook waterfall circuit.

And what, you fellas may be asking, of the heavenly bodies mentioned earlier; what more heavenly bodies could there be than Venus and our Sun? The 1874 transit of Venus across the face of the Sun was observed from the grounds of Woodford House, thus the naming of the Transit of Venus Track on which we began this rather exceptional walk today.

John Cardy

OUR SEPTEMBER WALK

Friday 18th September 2015

**A Basalt Capped Peak of 1062 metres,
Woodland and Heath, Panoramic Views
and Awe-inspiring Cliffs**

Mount Banks and Banks Wall.

The group last walked this circuit in May 2011. This is an easy to medium walk of about 9 km. A gentle climb of approximately 180 metres, with some steep sections, to the summit of the mount, then down through open woodland and heath to the edge of the chasm where there are majestic views. The return is via the fire trail which skirts around Mt Banks; wildflowers should be in spring display.

Meet at the Mt Banks Picnic Ground off the Bells Line of Road about 4km east of the Mt Wilson turn off at 9.30am or at Merry Garth for a 9.00am departure

Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 (after 7pm).

NB: Helen and John Cardy will be away from 6 September until the Thursday prior to this walk, a message can be left on 9871 3661 or on mobile 0418 646 487 but we will only be able to respond, if required, on the evening of 17 September.

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 16th October 2015 – Runners Track, Scrivener Pass, Danes Way - Mt Wilson to Mt Irvine

Friday 20th November 2015 – Ikara Ridge at Mt Victoria

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 11th September – Silva Plana

Friday 9th October – Gregson Park

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 for details