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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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DARGAN ARCH

TOPIC

## OUR DECEMBER WALK

DARGAN ARCH at DARGAN

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2015

Another year has come and gone, another year of monthly walks; the third Friday of each month is a significant date for we walkers. As we look back on those walks let us also look at significant events, and some not very significant events, which have occurred through history on those same dates.

Our first walk for 2015 was held on the 16<sup>th</sup> January. On this day in 1793 the first free settlers arrived to set up homes in Australia. In 1937, on this day, the miracle fibre, nylon, was patented by the Dupont Company. Also on this day, in 1853, André Michelin was born in Paris; with his brother Edouard he founded the Michelin Tyre Company. In 1898 the Michelin Man came into being; one of the oldest and most recognisable trademarks in the world. André insisted the roly-poly figure was based on his chubby brother who, he said, resembled a stack of tyres; it is not known what Edouard had to say about that – in all probability his response would have been unprintable.

Michelin tyres have rolled across inestimable kilometres of pavement across the world; we visited pavements of a different kind today,



Summer in the Bush

the Tessellated Pavements at Mt Irvine. The fires about fifteen months previous had left the track a little indistinct so this walk involved some track clearing and cairn construction; cairns by Freda were of a rather 'unique' design. The tessellations on the rock platforms and the distant views are always spectacular but a tiny gem spotted along the way sticks in my mind; a small group of Bonnet Orchids or Tartan Tongue Orchids rising from the leaf litter provided a rather special display.

Our February walk was undertaken on the 20<sup>th</sup> the day on which, in 1939, just a little over two years after the material was patented, nylon stockings were first shown at the San Francisco Exposition. Also on this day in 1962 John Glenn became the first American to orbit the Earth, completing three orbits in just less than five hours. Two giant leaps forward for mankind.

In stark contrast to these modern day events we visited the Aboriginal rock art at Marinygu Marragu (Blackfellows Hand Rock), the cliff edge which afforded expansive views of the Wolgan Valley and the ancient pagodas of The Temple of Doom on the Newnes Plateau. Space travel and nylon stockings, two stark examples which demonstrate just how lightly, by comparison, the Wirajuri, Dharug and Gundungurra peoples trod on this land for tens of thousands of years. The rock art stencil of a boomerang extended to include a wrist and

hand, the amazing sculptural forms of the pagodas and a group of tiny bright yellow Pagoda Daisies are images from this walk.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> March 1727 mathematician and physicist Sir Isaac Newton died. Coincidentally, or perhaps by design, on this day in 1916 Albert Einstein published his Theory of Relativity, revolutionising physics and astronomy. Also on this day in 1999 Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones completed the first non-stop circumnavigation of the globe in a hot-air balloon - 42,600 kilometres in just under twenty days.

The views Piccard and Jones would have had from their balloon must have been amazing, we also had some spectacular views on our walk of the 20<sup>th</sup> March, but then everything is relative. We walked from Evans Lookout to Govetts Leap Lookout via Beauchamp Falls and Junction Rock. Just some of the images which are stored in the memory from this walk are the rustic stone steps climbing between the buttressed trunks of two forest giants in The Fernery, the sheer cliffs above Beauchamp Falls, the spectacle of the water plummeting over Govetts Leap Falls when viewed from below and a water dragon seen posing nonchalantly on a nearby rock along the way.

Cartoon characters Daffy Duck and Elmer J Fudd made their debut in the film Porky's Duck Hunt on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 1937 (I did say some events were not so significant), the first successful helicopter flight was made by Igor Sikorsky on this day in 1941 and in 1421 on this day the North Sea broke through the dykes at Dort in The Netherlands.

We were to see lots of rushing water but of a more benign nature on our walk of the 17<sup>th</sup> April. We followed Darwins Walk, trod the National Pass and climbed through the Valley of the Waters at Wentworth Falls. The many small cascades flowing strongly along Jamison Creek, white shrouds of mist swirling around the cliff faces below Wentworth Falls, all the falls in the Valley of the Waters flowing at their best and the view from Queen Victoria Lookout of a line of cotton wool puffs of cloud near Kings Tableland, illuminated in

part by the afternoon sun breaking through the clouds, remain impressed on the mind.

The 15<sup>th</sup> May 1940 saw the first time that nylon stockings went on sale to the public in New York City; sixty four million pairs had been sold by December of that year. (No, I don't have an obsession with nylon stockings, it just so happens that these events occurred on the same dates as our bushwalks. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.) Australia's Flying Doctor Service began operating from Cloncurry in Queensland, with the help of Qantas on this day in 1928. In 1935 on this day Charles Kingsford Smith and Patrick Taylor were on a mail run to New Zealand when their aircraft, the Southern Cross, developed engine trouble. Taylor climbed out under the wing and transferred oil from one engine to the other to rectify the situation.

We were on the edge, perhaps not quite so close as Taylor, when we walked Walls Ledge, Colliers Causeway, Porters Pass and Centennial Glen at Blackheath on this day in May; the twenty fifth anniversary of the group. The deep blue sky reflected in a farm dam below Walls Ledge with a row of large trees carrying their golden Autumn clothes, a narrow stream of white water snaking its way down Slippery Dip Waterfall and a tiny stone cairn in a nook on a rock outcrop near Lamberts Lookout are imprinted on the memory from this walk.

The Statue of Liberty, in 200 packing cases, arrived in the US from France on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 1885. On this day in 1917 the name Windsor was adopted by the British royal family, renouncing all German titles and names, and in 1978 Garfield, the lasagne loving cartoon cat was 'born'. (I repeat; not all events, depending on your point of view, were of great significance.)

Following heavy rain overnight, this walk, on the 19<sup>th</sup> June was changed from the Ruined Castle to Prince Henry Cliff Walk, a right royal Anglicised name and we would get to see a liberated statue of another kind. A mist-capped Mount Solitary, the rock image of a gruff-looking man staring into the valley near

Copelands Lookout, the distant view from Tallawalla Lookout back to Bridal Veil Falls and Leura Falls, and Orphan Rock, the sandstone statue liberated from the nearby cliffs remain in my memory of this walk.

It appears nothing of great significance happened throughout history on the 17<sup>th</sup> July, which is quite appropriate, as our planned walk to Mermaids cave, the Mystery Holes and Coachwood Glen had to be abandoned due to heavy snow.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> August 1959 Hawaii became the 50th state of the United States and on this day in 1965 Gemini 5 was shot into space. We launched ourselves onto the Transit of Venus track on this day to view no less than nine waterfalls as we made our way from Woodford to Hazelbrook. The gully filled with golden wattle where we had morning tea, the beauty, in differing forms, of the nine waterfalls and the dark stone below Horseshoe Falls shaped in the image of a man's head, complete with blond curly hair, are images from this walk.

The summit of Mt Everest was reached, via the previously unclimbed southwest face, by Britons Dougal Haston and Doug Scott on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1975; with marginally less effort we reached the summit of Mount Banks on the 24<sup>th</sup> September this year and continued on to Banks Wall. The magnificent array of wildflowers encountered along the Explorers Range and the stupendous views from Banks Wall into the Grose and Govett Gorges are wonderful memories from this walk.

Marie Antoinette had a bad hair day on the 16<sup>th</sup> October 1793 when she had an appointment with Madame Guillotine, on this day in 1922 singer and entertainer Max Bygraves was born; lots of people have mixed feelings about that, and in 1975 on this day Peter Weir's movie *Picnic at Hanging Rock* was released. We visited Picnic Point on this day when we walked from Mt Wilson to Mt Irvine via The Runners Track and Scrivener Pass. A magnificent display of Waratahs, the views from Picnic Point to Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens and beyond, and the image of

a tiny glossy bronze beetle dotted with gold are images that remain from this walk.

In the Murchison Mountains on the South Island of New Zealand on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1948 a colony of about 240 Takahe was discovered; this flightless bird was thought to be extinct. On this day in 1999 fire broke out in Windsor Castle destroying priceless art works and damaging or destroying over one hundred rooms. It was also rather hot at Mount Victoria on the 20<sup>th</sup> November so our planned walk on Ikara Ridge was changed to the more sheltered Little Zig Zag and Rienits Pass. A Lyrebird's nest tucked onto a rock shelf near Watchtower Cave, the 'wedding cake' formation in the Bushrangers Cave, the shower of glistening droplets cascading over the cliff at the depleted Witches Glen Waterfall and the expansive views into the Kanimbla Valley from Bedes Lookout; images embedded in the mind from this walk.

And so we arrive at the 18<sup>th</sup> December, a significant day for this group, for not only do we get a morning walk but we also get to indulge in lunch with friends in the beautiful gardens at Merry Garth. Regarding significant events which occurred on this day the first Australian opal gemstones were discovered on this day in 1872 at Listowel Downs in Queensland. Opalined fossils of dinosaurs have since been unearthed in Australian opal fields. English palaeontologist Sir Richard Owen, who created the word 'dinosaur' (terrible lizard), died on this day in 1892; today we will visit an ancient formation; nay, not an opalined fossil of a dinosaur, yet a real hidden gem of these mountains.

I was rather relieved that Libby organises vehicle rationalisations when twenty-eight walkers gathered at Merry Garth on this morning. We were to pick up two more walkers along the way and three participants were to leave early and return to Merry Garth to organise food for the luncheon. Chaos would result if it were left to me, but Libby soon had a convoy on its way to Dargan.

At Sandham Road Allan and Jeanie Cupitt joined the convoy for the short journey to the

start of our walk. We gathered in the clearing of the transmission line easement where we welcomed Lorraine and Bruce Delprado who have recently joined the group; we also welcomed Carol Conway's daughter Beth and James who were joining us today.

We set off along the fire trail, noting along the way the plethora of Waratah shrubs (*Telopea speciosissima*), young stems having sprouted from lignotubers following the October 2013 fires. They were flowering prolifically in October this year when Helen and I visited to check details for this walk and are now setting their boat-like fruit; a few still carry their long bright red bracts. The fire trail is initially a fairly level path through open woodland but soon begins to descend at the end of the ridge.

A footpad leads on from the end of the fire trail. Swaths of Flannel Flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*) soon surround us. As is the norm they flower profusely two years after fire and that is amply demonstrated here; fields of starbursts of velvety white green-tipped bracts surrounding central flower heads held aloft on stems about thirty centimetres high stretch across the hillsides; a wonderful sight. Grass Leaf Trigger Plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*) also abound here carrying their bright pink flowers along stems rising from tufts of grass-like leaves. On rock platforms there are also a few examples of the Narrow Leaf Trigger Plant (*Stylidium lineare*), their flower stems rising from tiny basal tufts.

The track meanders across rock platforms past examples of Broad Leaf Geebung (*Persoonia levis*) and the lemon/yellow form of the uncommon Tea Tree (*Leptospermum macrocarpum*) displaying just a few remnant flowers from this season and, as the species name suggests, with an abundance of characteristic large seed capsules developing.

We drop down the face of a rock ledge, emerge onto a rock outcrop and are looking down onto a hidden gem of these mountains; we have arrived at the Dargan Arch.

This amazing spectacle, an arch perhaps 15 metres long and about 5 metres wide forms a bridge some 10 metres above the floor of the

remnant cave from which this arch was created; a 'must see' geological feature of these mountains, yet one seldom hears of its existence. From this rock outcrop we have a view beneath the span of the arch to the line of the creek below; we shall explore that little glen after morning tea on the arch.

To allow easier access to the creek line a rope is strung across a sloping rock face and secured between two trees; this acts as a 'handrail' to assist in the short descent.

The view from below the arch is rather impressive. The edge of the arch and the rear wall of the original cave form a large elliptical skylight; the skylight illuminates that wall. The arch is an erosion residual remaining after the collapse of the rear section of the cave roof many thousands of years ago. The floor below the arch, made up of residue from the collapse material, slopes steeply toward the rear wall. Ground and tree ferns grow in the shade below the arch while toward the rear, taller trees seek the energy of the sun by reaching toward the skylight; this vegetation is obviously irrigated by rain falling through the opening above.

Adjacent to the arch cave is another large cave having a high domed roof, circles of differing layers of sandstone diminishing in diameter as they rise to the high point of the dome; a very impressive sight. In contrast to the arch cave the floor of this cave, due to the complete roof, is quite dry and is devoid of vegetation; there is a similar third cave adjacent to this.

Perhaps, in a couple of hundred thousand years there may be three arches in a row here; we shall simply have to wait and see.

We now make our way down to the creek and there is a sudden and dramatic change from a dry environment to a lush world of moss shrouded rock ledges and boulders with creek banks supporting Soft Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*). We explore along this creek which leads us past towering rock faces and out into a wider, more open valley. Here there are magnificent examples of King Ferns (*Todea barbara*) displaying an abundance of lush fronds; possibly regrowth after the fires of two years ago. High up on a sheer cliff face

opposite sits a Grass Tree (*Xanthorrhoea sp*) highlighted against the dark cliffs by the sun; a tall straight scape and flower spike rises from the centre of its skirt of long fine leaves weeping gracefully over its short stout trunk.

We retrace our steps back to the arch, retrieve the rope along the way, and spend some time relaxing on the formation, soaking up the very special atmosphere surrounding Dargan Arch.

Having Jenny Dargan walking with us today I guess it is inevitable that the discussion will turn to the origin of the name Dargan. Jenny herself informs us that Dargan was of Irish origin and then makes use of white man's magic to find, via Google, that the father of the Irish rail system was railway engineer William Dargan. Now there was a Dargan's Deviation in use on the nearby railway line between 1897 and 1910, did this have some relation to William Dargan? Not so, a local creek which rises just west of Newnes Junction and flows into the River Lett was named Dargans Creek in the late 1830s after Thomas Dargan, a supervisor of road works on early construction on the Bells Line Of Road route, especially in the Mt Tomah area. The railway deviation ran near, and took its name from, that creek. The locality, initially known as Dargans, then Dargan, and other local features with that name have their origin with Thomas Dargan, the road works supervisor and the creek that took his name.

Back in the enchanting environs of Merry Garth we join many of our 'armchair walker' friends to enjoy a sumptuous luncheon to celebrate Christmas and the past year of fabulous walks. Many thanks to Libby and Keith for their hospitality, to my much better half Helen for her organisation of the food and many many other things, to all those who provided delicious dishes for the luncheon and to all those who make this such an enjoyable and rewarding group in which to belong.

Now, where did I leave those nylon stockings?

John Cardy

## **OUR JANUARY WALK**

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2016**

### **Enclosed Rainforest, a Babbling Brook and Views from a Rather Royal Seat**

#### **Matthies Track, Waterfall Creek and The Throne at Mt Wilson**

We will follow Matthies Track into the rainforest behind Merry Garth and drop down to explore Waterfall Creek, then visit The Throne in more open country before returning to the shade of the rainforest along the Waterfall Walk.

Meet at Merry Garth at 9.30am.

Bring morning tea, lunch and 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.**

### **FUTURE WALKS** (Tentative schedule)

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> 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 would be appreciated.**

**8<sup>th</sup> January – meet at Wynne Reserve**

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

### **VALE ANNE CLARKE**

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> December this year we lost a long time bushwalking friend Anne Clarke. Anne first walked with the group on an afternoon walk on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 1998, we had the pleasure of Anne's company on our walks for around fifteen years; she and Don became 'armchair walkers' about three years ago. Our sincere sympathies to you Don and to all the family; Anne will be very fondly remembered.