
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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LEURA CASCADES TO LYREBIRD DELL

TOPIC

OUR MAY WALK

LEURA CASCADES,
GORDON FALLS, POOL OF
SILOAM and LYREBIRD
DELL at LEURA

Friday 20th May 2016

In Helen's and my absence on holidays during the May and June walks, Libby has written charming reports, in her inimitable style, which capture the essence of each of those walks; here is the first.

A glorious late summer's day greeted eleven walkers at the Leura Falls car park. It was good to have Des Barrett, Kim Gow and Bruce & Lorraine Delprado back with us and we thought of John & Helen Cardy as they were now many kilometres away on their great adventure, visiting the National Parks in the United States and then the Galapagos Islands.

We set off down the well-made steps to the Leura Cascades, surprised how much water was gently tumbling over the rocks, and into the clear sandy pool below.

Back up the steps and onto the Prince Henry walk where a short detour took us to the Bridal Veil Lookout. All around below us were the great cliffs dropping into a small shadowy gully far below. Across this gully the Bridal Veil Falls form a wide white ribbon of water falling into the depths below. A lone Grass Tree (*Xanthorrhoea Sp*) growing in the



Winter in the Bush

sunlight on the edge of the nearby cliff was like a sentinel guarding this majestic view.

The path took us down below the houses and properties along the Olympian Parade, and then out between the rocks to Tarpeian Rock Lookout where we settled down for a leisurely morning tea. Before us was the fabulous view with Mount Solitary in its splendid isolation dominating the scene. To our right the last of the Three Sisters could just be seen at the end of the cliff line from the Leura Cascades area. Below those cliffs are the Leura Forest

and the bright green clearing of the old sewerage works, with the Pitts Amphitheatre behind. Beyond Mount Solitary sat the great mound of Mount Cloudmaker, the cliffs of the Kanangra Walls and the flat-topped Mount Colong on the far horizon.

Looking left the Sublime Point headland with the Kings Tableland cliff line beyond. We could make out the Lions Head formation, the destination of our April walk, and far beyond this, Mount Jellore and Mount Gibraltar near Mittagong behind the Burragorang Cliffs.

As we sat there we noticed a small plume of smoke starting to rise over to our right, down in the valley and then smoke over to our left. Our daughter Beth, who works with the Fire Mitigation Team of the National Parks, had told me that the Parks hoped to do a hazard reduction in this area today. This is why all the

walking tracks in the valley south of Katoomba and Leura were closed today.

Our path took us along the top of the cliff line where most of the vegetation was quite stunted, due to the winds and the poor soil. Few flowers are out in May, the white flowers of the slender rice flower (*Pimelea linifolia*), the occasional bright red flower of the honey flower or mountain devil (*Lambertia formosa*), the tall attractive golden yellow spikes of the hairpin banksia (*Banksia spinulosa*) and a few clusters of the white flowers of the tea tree (*Leptospermum Sp*); all except the banksia flowering out of season.

There were sheltered gullies too, some with stands of the tall, cream, straight trunks of the Blue Mountains ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*) and others even more shaded with patches of rainforest, ferns and many overhangs and small caves.

From Olympian Rock Lookout we could just see the blue water of Lake Burragarang beyond the end of the Kings Tableland and the hazard reduction in the valley below was taking off well with another new plume of smoke starting and the fires spreading along the intended line.

We crossed the newly reconstructed Buttenshaw Bridge across a very deep, narrow ravine and then walked out to Elysian Rock Lookout. Several little rock warblers were flying and hopping about on the rocks there, and they were joined by some white-browed scrub wrens, darting in and out of the small clumps of tea tree which clung to the rocks.

By then the control burn was going along well and we could see a helicopter far below, dropping incendiaries to start fires further in along the line. At the Gordon Falls Lookout, the helicopters were landing and taking off from a field nearby, flying overhead before dropping down into the valley.

We sat at tables in the picnic area, for lunch in the warm sunshine, before heading down the many steps to the Pool of Siloam. There in a sheltered gully, the Gordon Falls Creek drops down into a clear sandy pool and large moss

covered rocks enclose this charming shady area.

The path then follows the creek up through the open bushland to the Lyrebird Dell, a small cleared grassy area near a large overhang of rock. Two tables and seats have thoughtfully been placed here, making it an ideal place for a picnic.

Further on up the creek was another fall of water from a small cliff, this time the water coming out like a spout into the sandy pool below. Nearby were some bushes or small trees with narrow leaves, pale on the underside, and small cream flower buds. These were the black sassafras (*Atherosperma moschatum*); a small rare tree of the high altitudes which grow in the ferny gullies along sheltered creek lines. The flowers, when they open in spring, are creamy white, cup-shaped, and turn pink with age.

We left the creek line here and walked up the well-made Lone Pine Steps, with the reminder of the First World War dates inscribed into the steps. A winding path through the bush led us to the Lone Pine planted 100 years ago and struggling in the poor soil and bushland setting.

We walked back from the Gordon Falls along Olympian Parade beside the neat gardens and houses before heading off into the bush again to 'check on the burn off' from Tarpeian Rock. The valley was full of smoke, the fires had almost all joined along the line and the slight breeze was being very helpful, pushing the fire a little deeper. (The National Parks were very happy with this control burn.)

Before we returned to the cars we had a look at where the old swimming pool on the Leura Falls Park had been. Some of us remembered swimming in the cold water there, way back in the 1950s. Now only the concrete surrounds remain, the rest all filled in and grassed, making a pleasant picnic area.

We all set off in different directions to our homes after another wonderful day of sunshine, beautiful views, good walking and

great company, grateful we are able to explore this great country of ours.

Libby Raines

OUR JUNE WALK

**POPES GLEN, HORSESHOE FALLS,
PULPIT ROCK and GOVETTS LEAP at
BLACKHEATH**

Friday 17th June 2016

Here is Libby's second offering, eagerly anticipated I am sure, after reading her account of the May walk.

It was a grey day as eight of us met near the duck ponds at the Blackheath Memorial Park. It was good to have Jenny, a friend of Barbara Harry, with us once again and after leaving two cars at Govetts Leap we set off down Popes Glen. This area was one of the first Bushcare sites on the mountains and the restoration work here is magnificent; a great result after so many hours of hard work by the volunteers who have worked, and still work here.

The path at first is quite high on the edge of the glen; we could look down and see a green swathe of the pouched coral fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*) which covers the ground here. A few massive eucalyptus trees had fallen, roots and all, in the big windstorm of 2011; they lay on the ground as stark reminders of the power of the wind.

Eventually the path wound its way down to the Popes Glen Creek. Very old and tall tea trees (*Leptospermum Sp*) grow there in amongst the very thick carpet of vegetation made up of ferns *Blechnaceae*, *Doodia*, *Polystichum* and *Gleichenia*. The trees, mostly the Blue Mountains ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*) were very scattered, so the area had a very open feel.

We followed the clear flowing creek, crossing three small wooden bridges en route until we came to Boyds Beach where we enjoyed our morning tea. Here the creek waters cascade

over the low rock ledges and fall into a shallow fern-edged pool with sandy banks.

The track then wound down past some tall rocky outcrops to another lovely sandy-bottomed pool, before we came to a junction in the track. Here we crossed the creek on large rocks, climbed up some stone steps cut into the rock face and we were on a ledge overlooking the Horseshoe Falls and the Grose Valley.

What a contrast this was to the sheltered glen where we had been walking; it was quite breathtaking! A stiff cold wind blew and we looked around at the vast cliffs which surrounded this spectacular view. Ahead were the great sheer cliffs of Fortress Ridge and the Lockley Pylon ridge, with Mount Hay standing tall behind; nearer on our right Evans Head and then the cascading ribbon of Govetts Leap Falls. Below us the Popes Glen Creek fell over the cliffs forming the Horseshoe Falls and in the protected, moist, shady environment far below the rainforest trees formed a patchwork of different shades of green. On our left the cliffs formed an arc and we could marvel at them and all the strips of vegetation which were growing on the narrow ledges.

Up a very rocky rough track to Cripps Lookout where again we admired the great cliffs and the beautiful Horseshoe Falls which we could see better from this vantage point.

The track then wound around the top of the cliffs, sometimes coming to a cliff edge and then around into sheltered gullies. Beside the track grew many hairpin banksias (*Banksia spinulosa*) with their deep orange cones glowing in the soft light. Here were many fuchsia heath (*Epacris longiflora*) with their tiny leaves and lovely long tubular white-tipped red flowers, some hidden in amongst the ferns and other vegetation and others clinging to mossy rocks. The starry white five-petalled flowers of the tea tree (*Leptospermum Sp*) were starting to come out, their simple flowers all looking upwards, and the first flowers of the sunshine wattle (*Acacia terminalus*) stood out, clear yellow against the green vegetation. There were many thickets of

black wattle (*Callicoma serratifolia*) their shiny very serrated glossy leaves very distinct and we brushed past great clumps of old mans whiskers or curly sedge (*Caustis flexuosa*) and ferns growing thickly beside the track.

In some areas, where bushfires had run up the slopes (probably the Long Alley fire in 2006 when the fire jumped the Darling Causeway one night and burnt its way down into the Grose Valley causing problems, especially to Blackheath) the burnt trunks of the Blue Mountain ash (*Eucalyptus oreadesa*) stood, tall and white; beneath them thickets of young saplings grew.

We passed under many rock overhangs, some dry and others dripping with moisture and covered with many plants, mosses and sundews. Some of the rocks were very weatherworn; the ironstone in them making intricate patterns protruding from the softer, worn away sandstone.

Eventually we came to Pulpit Rock. Back in the chilly wind we explored the various rock platforms, down well-made stairs with good handrails. The vertical cliffs were so close, quite stunning, dark and brooding in the shadows and the view before us was quite magnificent. We could now see the Blue Gum Forest and Junction Rock, destinations of previous big walks and Mount Banks peeping around the corner on our left. We found some sheltered areas beside the path in which to enjoy our lunch before retracing our steps along the top of the cliffs to the Popes Glen Creek and stepping stone crossing.

The day had remained grey with low cloud but occasionally little patches of sunshine broke through the cloud and lit the great orange cliffs and from time to time little circles of the bright green of the trees showed up on the wooded talus slopes. The bell miners persistent calling could be heard in the valley.

We scrambled up the rough track back to Govetts Leap. The National Parks personnel have been severely cut and people retiring have not been replaced so they are very short staffed. It may be years before this small steep section of track is replaced, as they don't have

the workforce or money to tend to all their many walking tracks.

We bid farewell to the lovely valley at Govetts Leap, looking fondly across the valley to the distant Pulpit Rock. Yes it was a long walk; Barbara wore out a pair of shoes along the way home! Makeshift repairs were made en route using two long shoelaces which Robert Chesney fortunately had in his pack; Barbara was able to continue on her way, so thankyou Robert.

We enjoyed a cup of tea back at the park accompanied by some friendly wood ducks, a pleasant way to end this wonderful day which we had all enjoyed so much. The memories of sheltered gullies, clear streams and great spectacular views will be with us for a long time.

Libby Raines

Many thanks Libby for those accounts of the walks; they will, I am sure, convey all armchair walkers into these two quite different bushland settings. They have certainly transported Helen and me back into the mountain environments we treasure; a lovely welcome home.

(John Cardy)

OUR JULY WALK**Friday 15th July 2016****Historic Ruins, Spectacular Cliff Faces, a Rippling River and perhaps a Roo or Two****The Ruins Walking Track Around the Shale Oil Complex and the Philosophers Walk at Newnes in the Wollemi National Park in the Wolgan Valley**

The group last visited the ruins of the shale oil complex in June 2003. This is a relatively easy walk combining an exploration of the ruins with the Philosophers Walk circuit through nearby bushland below the cliffs of Old Baldy. Note: There are stepping stones across the Wolgan River at the causeway but it may be prudent to bring a towel just in case wading is necessary because of the river level.

Meet at 9.00am in the Coles Car Park (Bent Street or St Patrick's Primary School end) of the Lithgow Valley Shopping Centre or at Merry Garth for an 8.30am departure.

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

There will be a vehicle rationalisation at our meeting point in Lithgow for the 54 kilometre drive mainly on sealed roads, except for the last 9 kilometres or so, to our start point.

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 19th August 2016 – Ikara Ridge at Mount Victoria

Friday 16th September 2016 – Deep Pass on the Newnes Plateau

Friday 21st October 2016 – Mount Hay and The Butterbox

Friday 18th November 2016 - Leura Cascades, Leura Forest, Furber Steps

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.

8th July - meet outside Windy Ridge

12th August – meet at Queens Avenue / Wynnes Rocks Road

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 for details