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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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THE LOST CITY ON NEWNES PLATEAU

TOPIC

## OUR AUGUST WALK

The LOST CITY on the  
NEWNES PLATEAU

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> August 2017

A quintessentially Australian scene greeted Helen and myself when we arrived early at the Zig Zag Railway car park: three kangaroos hopped out from behind the bushes and sat in the middle of the roadway; two adults and a youngster. They remained there for quite some time then loped leisurely to the presently disused rail line; paused as though checking for approaching trains; then hopped across the tracks and disappeared into the bush. A heart-warming sight on this rather bleak windy morning.

We left Sydney under a clear blue sky; just a thin band of cloud could be seen draped across the mountains. As we were driving along Bells Line of Road, Jenny Dargan rang to inform us that it was snowing at Blackheath, but that was not going to deter her from coming on the walk. As the rest of the group began arriving the cloud cover varied from low, dark and foreboding to higher and lighter. There were occasional breaks allowing the weak wintry sun to seep through. The swirling wind flung sleet and snowflakes through the air.

Fourteen walkers gathered in this invigorating atmosphere. We welcomed back Stephen List and Rosie Walsh who have not been with us



Spring in the Bush

for some time, (despite Stephen's threat to be on every walk this year); and welcomed their friend Jason Watts who signed up as a member. (That means we have gained a new member on four of our last five walks.) We also welcomed Lesley Roberts, a friend of Anne Rodrigues, who was joining us for the first time.

Libby quickly had us each allocated a seat in one of four vehicles for the eleven kilometre drive across the Newnes Plateau to the starting point for this walk, many thanks to the drivers; Merren,

Jenny, Des and Stephen.

We parked just off the Glow Worm Tunnel Road adjacent to the Bungleboori Camping Grounds. That very evocative camping area name comes from the Aboriginal for 'crooked bend' and Bunglboori Creek, which rises at the grounds, has many a 'crooked bend' as it twists and turns along its tortuous path of about forty-five kilometres across the Newnes Plateau to meet the Wollangambe River. It seems rather incongruous that a creek carrying an Aboriginal name flows across a plateau named after a wealthy English publisher and editor, Sir George Newnes, who was chairman of the Commonwealth Oil Corporation Ltd, which set up the oil shale works in the Wolgan Valley; it empties into a river also carrying an Aboriginal name; such is our historical potpourri I guess.

It was wonderful to have Libby back in her usual leadership role and I once more took up the position of whip at the rear of the group, a very suitable position as I try to regain some fitness and pace.

Just as we set off there was a flurry of light snow which added to the beauty of the open woodland, where many straight-trunked trees carried skirts of discarded bark which cascaded to their bases and spread across the ground.

Initially there was a maze of fire trails and tracks, to use those terms loosely, for there were many deep water-filled ruts and large pools of water along the alignments; driving through here would be challenging to say the least. We picked our way carefully around and past these pools and ruts, as silt, deposited when the water levels were higher, was very slippery in places.

Soon the track became better drained because of its slope and the going got easier. We were now walking past lines of Sunshine Wattle (*Acacia terminalis*); golden beacons under the leaden sky. The flurries of snow became heavier and the winds more biting; time for a few more layers, gloves, etc.

The open woodland soon gave way to heathland; here the effects of the 2013 'State Mine Bushfire' became more evident; charred remains of banksias, drumsticks, conesticks and more remain partly hidden among the regrowth. Mother Nature treated us to a demonstration, as we crested a small rise, as to why the heath plants grow so low; they were bending and thrashing around vigorously under the power of the biting, swirling wind; any taller growth here displayed the classic windswept look indicating the direction of the prevailing winds.

Presently, we passed the sign which declared we were entering the Snow Gum Flora Reserve. A little further on we were treated to a very small display of early flowers on a Wolgan or Mallee Snow Gum (*Eucalyptus gregsoniana*); starbursts of fine white filaments nestled among narrow leaves; they

come into full flower in November and December.

On the lee side of the ridge, as the track begins to descend, glimpses of a few rock formations could be seen through the trees. Then, at the point where the placement of large boulders prevents any further vehicular access, one hundred and eighty degree views open up; we have arrived at The Lost City.

Rising majestically from the valley and dotted across the hillsides are a host of magnificent pagodas, formations of sandstone and ironstone, weatherworn into the most intricate of shapes; an absolute delight to the eye. *The Macquarie Dictionary* defines a pagoda as "a temple or sacred building usually more or less pyramidal or forming a tower of many storeys". These pagodas are indeed temples to the works of Mother Nature and are sacred to anyone who treasures the natural beauty and grandeur of these mountains.

There is a short steepish drop from this point down to the nearest pagodas and some members of the group were on the formations when I viewed them from here. This put the pagodas into scale; the walkers appeared as toy soldiers on their flanks.

The wan winter sun was no match for the blustery winds and we sought sheltered spots at the base of the pagodas to partake of lunch. Libby's bushwalker cake was even more appreciated than usual to replace some of the energy drained by the cold.

Though the conditions were uncomfortable one had to emerge from our sheltered nooks to explore the pagodas and take in the views on offer.

On the northern flank of the ridge, wattles covered the slope down to the creek containing a small dam, providing a golden foreground to the pagoda formations beyond. Near at hand, ironstone inclusions formed tubular protrusions, convoluted shelves, gently curving eaves and arched wave-like formations.

On the southern side there is a wonderfully wind-worn shelter cave sitting atop the

truncated base of a pagoda. The view across Marrangaroo Creek, which also carries a small dam, reveals a line of pagodas not unlike the Three Sisters; in this case there are five siblings. Marrangaroo by the way is Aboriginal for 'little blue flowers' though this writer did not sight any such blossoms. (Marrangaroo Creek rises near where we parked the cars, just across the road from where Bungleboori Creek rises. It flows however in the opposite direction and feeds into the Coxs River; another mélange of Aboriginal and European sources for the nomenclature of features; an historical potpourri indeed.)

Beyond these pagodas was a ghostly grey forest; the skeletal remains of fire ravaged trees; spears of dead wood pointing skyward.

It was not a day to linger and we set off on the return journey to retrace our steps back to the cars. As we made our way back up the hill it was noticed the large cluster of pagodas on the right carried a small wind-worn cave; viewed through a zoom lens revealed this cave to be quite deep and opened out beyond its almost circular entrance; a perfect home for some wildlife perhaps.

It was a pleasant walk back, time for some conversation; the wind seemed to have dropped a little; perhaps we were just getting used to it. Shortly before we arrived at the cars there was another flurry of snow, probably heavier than we had experienced during the day but it was an ephemeral flurry; once again adding to the beauty of the bush, yet it was gone by the time we reached the cars.

We headed back to the Zig Zag Railway car park where we intended having our usual after walk afternoon tea but the conditions had deteriorated by then; more snow flurries, more wind. It was decided to abandon the after walk cuppa and we headed off for the welcome warmth and comfort of our homes after another wonderful walk.

This was a lovely day in the bush, quite different from our usual walking conditions, indeed a first for the group. We have not walked in falling snow before and it was an

exhilarating experience in many ways. We did walk in fresh settled snow which had fallen overnight on Mount Bindo way back in August 2001, another memorable experience; such is the remarkable diversity of moods in these mountains.

Let us finish with a few other connotations of the word 'pagoda': it was the name given to gold and silver coins formerly current in southern India, due to the representation of a pagoda on their reverse. Several trees have also been commonly known as Pagoda Trees in Indian and Eastern cultures: *Sophora japonica*, the Japanese Pagoda Tree; *Plumeria acutifolia*, the Frangipani; and *Ficus benghalensis*, the Banyan Tree. 'To shake the pagoda tree' is a saying used in India, meaning to make a fortune rapidly; now there's a tree I wouldn't mind having in the backyard.

John Cardy

A serene tranquillity has returned to the bush; those enigmatical little happenings of the last few months have ceased today. They were the effect of the restless spirits of two bushwalkers deprived of their beloved bushwalks. Those spirits are peacefully resting now that both Libby and I are back in the bushland environment we love so much; a sense of calm pervades the bush, and so ends this arcane little saga. (JC)

## OUR SEPTEMBER WALK

Friday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2017

**Open Heathland and Vast Valley Views**

**Fortress Rock Lookout and Fortress Ridge off the Mt Hay Road north of Leura**

The group last visited this venue in November 2013. This is a relatively easy walk, about nine kilometres return, which follows ridgelines with very few ups and downs, just some gentle undulations. We will first visit Fortress Rock Lookout with views to the west across Govett Gorge to Evans and Govetts Leap lookouts; we will then continue along Fortress Ridge to Fortress Hill which offers 360 degree views.

**Meet at Leura on Mt Hay Road in the 'dip' just past Churchill St at 9.30am or at Merry Garth for an 8.45am departure.**

There is no direct access to Mt Hay Road from the Western Highway at Leura Primary School when travelling from Sydney; it is necessary to approach via the roundabout above the new tunnel, turn 180 degrees and travel back down the hill to turn left into Mt Hay Rd at the school. (Or travel via Britain St or Victory Lane and Churchill St to avoid the school.)

Those travelling from the Katoomba side also approach via this roundabout. 4WD vehicles would be very much appreciated. There will be a vehicle rationalisation for the approximately 9km drive to the start of the walk.

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 0400 444 966.**

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

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2017 – Boronia Point at Mt Wilson

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2017 – Lunch Rock and Wollangambe River near Bell

#### **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.**

**8<sup>th</sup> September – Meet corner of Queens Avenue and Wynnes Rocks Road**

**13<sup>th</sup> October – Meet corner of Queens Avenue and Wynnes Rocks Road**

**10<sup>th</sup> November – Meet Queens Avenue**

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