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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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## LUNCH ROCK NEAR BELL

## TOPIC

### OUR NOVEMBER WALK

LUNCH ROCK and  
WOLLANGAMBE RIVER  
near BELL

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2017

Fourteen walkers gathered at the Bell Railway Station where we welcomed Judy Fakes, a friend of Jenny Wilkins, who was joining us for the first time today. Libby was unable to be with us this morning so I took over as leader and Des Barrett once again moved into my usual position as whip.

The walk today is touched by elements deep in the ocean and at the extremes of the cosmos with an alfresco dining spot thrown into the mix; so join us dear reader as we explore this corner of the Newnes Plateau.

The weather is very pleasant; some broken cloud, sunny patches and a gentle breeze; I don't want to be dismissive but perhaps the predictions of storms by the weather gurus are a little over the top.

As we move out onto Sandham Road we are greeted, from the property opposite, by the deep guttural barking of three large dogs, dogs large enough to be ponies. However, their tails are wagging; perhaps 'their bark is worse than their bite' applies; I have no intention of finding out. A short walk along Sandham Road, to a point where the asphalt ends, takes



Summer in the Bush

us to a track which leads us across the 132kv transmission line easement and we enter the Blue Mountains National Park.

We are greeted by the brilliant yellow flowers of a host of Broad Leaf Drumsticks (*Isopogon anemonifolius*) interspersed with racemes of bright pink rounded unopened flowers of Matchheads or Heath Milkworts (*Comesperma ericinum*); a sight to behold.

The fire trail drops down steeply, care is needed on the loose surface, and we come across a pair of tardy Waratahs

(*Telopea speciosissima*), their buds just beginning to open, attractive balls of lemon-tipped pink bracts about to reveal their domed clusters of brilliant red flowers. Nearby there are other waratahs, their flowers past their best, yet still lighting up the bush. One plant carries five flower heads, the red providing a stark contrast to the jet-black flaky bark of a nearby Broad Leaf Geebung (*Persoonia levis*).

The firetrail levels out and swings to the right, leading us through open forest, soon it forks and we take the left-hand branch, stepping over the many tree trunks lying across our path. We pass an incredible example of the natural art forms which exist in the bush; the trunk of a fire ravaged scribbly gum presents as an amazing sculpture. An aperture burnt through its wide base provides a window to the ground cover beyond, dark charred hollows spiral up, bounded by narrow strips of

silvery live bark which has rolled into the burnt depressions; truly a sight to behold.

Soon the track narrows and we get that wonderful feeling of being enclosed by the bush. Young regrowth of various varieties of Tea Trees (*Leptospermum sp*) carry pristine five-petalled flowers varying from brilliant white, through lemon to pink. A few boronias display soft pink unopened buds among small spoon-shaped leaves, possibly the *Boronia algida*. Flannel Flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*) appear; one large flower is noted carrying a small glossy bronze beetle on its white velvety bract.

The track begins to descend and we pass a few examples of the Small-leaved Kunzea (*Kunzea parvifolia*) displaying their fluffy pink flowers. (Kunzeas take their genus name from German botanist Gustav Kunze.)

As we reach a camping spot beside a small, unnamed creek there is the distant rumble of thunder; far too distant for us to worry. We pause here for morning tea; Helen distributes her version of bushwalkers cake to save her carrying it any further, and very nice it is too.

Here the banks of the creek are adorned with brilliant lime green ferns which provide a magnificent foreground to the Waratahs growing beyond; multi-stemmed plants carrying unspoiled red globes, sixteen flower heads in one group.

Continuing on we cross the little creek and begin the climb up the hill; the track here follows a dry watercourse. Soon we divert to the right onto a rock platform which affords a view onto three large pagoda formations, two quite close and another further off to the right; the tip of Lunch Rock is visible beyond. These are platey pagodas with many layers of creamy sandstone interspersed with protruding plates of grey ironstone - very impressive.

Ray Nesci, as is his wont, explores a little further afield on the rock platform. Looking over a small ledge he discovers a cluster of six snakes, of varying sizes, intertwined together to soak up the warmth of the sun. A veritable nest of vipers; akin to a meeting of parliament

my manic mind muses, but that is being a little unkind ----- to the snakes.

Back on the main track we continue the climb up onto the plateau, passing along the way a cluster of Leafy Purple Flags or Native Iris (*Patersonia glabrata*) nestled beside the track; eight violet flowers turning their faces toward the sun. Also on display here are the delicate flower heads of the Smokebush (*Conospermum sp*), tiny pure-white tubular flowers with three lobes on the lower lip and a hooded upper lip carried in clusters atop narrow stems.

We now pass a rock pillar, a small pagoda-shaped formation with a protrusion near its top appearing as a horned gargoyle protecting the approach to Lunch Rock.

Before us now, rising out of the windblown heath, looms a large rock outcrop standing tall on the plateau at an elevation of 994 metres. This feature carries an identity crisis. Our walking group knows it as Lunch Rock. The late John Massar of the National Parks Association's Monday walking group referred to it as Submarine Rock, and that group continues to do so; indeed the profile as you approach from the Bell direction does appear as the conning tower of a submarine. It has also been referred to as "The Centre of the Universe"; a rather grandiose appellation I feel. Now, I am no expert on astronomy, as the following, I am sure, will amply demonstrate but, if the expanse of the universe is infinite and therefore has no boundaries, can a centre of the universe exist at all; alternatively, can just about anywhere be arbitrarily nominated as its centre? Just a random thought that popped into my twisted mind as I was typing this. I shall leave you to ponder that (or not) as you munch on your Weet-Bix.

We now pause to take in the expansive views from Lunch Rock. Across the winding Wollangambe River to the north west toward Gooches Crater and the Newnes State Forest, to the north over the ridges and valleys formed by Dumbano and Bungleboori Creeks and to the east across the Wollangambe Crater area to Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine and south back

toward Bells Line of Road from whence we have come; expansive views indeed.

Dark clouds appear to the west and the thunder sounds louder but the weather gurus among us contend that the storms are moving around south of our location. It is decided we will take the track down to the rock platforms overlooking the upper reaches of the Wollangambe River; some leave their packs here and we set off.

We walk through a large field of Tea Tree regrowth, the slender stems, tipped with clusters of small white flowers, sway in the breeze, setting up a wave-like motion across their expanse. The last time the group walked this track one had to force one's way through the thick vegetation in places; not so today, the heath is still slowly recovering from the October 2013 fires.

The track leads us across exposed rock shelves and between the burnt remains of the heath vegetation, the jagged cliffs on the opposite side of the river loom and we drop down to a vantage point overlooking the Wollangambe far below, its waters sparkling in the subdued light of the deep gorge. We spend some time taking in the rugged scenery on offer and then head back toward Lunch Rock.

Dark clouds are now becoming more menacing; our weather boffins are reassessing their prediction of them passing southward.

Back at Lunch Rock it now appears we should don wet weather gear, as rain appears imminent. Lightning is more frequent and it is considered prudent that we move off the plateau back down into the gully. Lunch at Lunch Rock is cancelled for today.

Then the heavens open!

First there is driving rain, followed after a few minutes by hail; mostly pea sized with some about as big as the end of your thumb; quite large enough to hit with a bit of a sting. The track back down into the gully, usually a dry creek bed, is now flowing freely. The volume of water flowing increases the further down the gully we progress. Eventually we have to abandon using the track and jump back and

forth across this ephemeral stream and find a way through the bush. We reach the little unnamed creek and the rain and hail stops.

Climbing back up the hill toward Bell the sun occasionally appears and moisture brings the bush alive. The wet bark on the scribbly gums is a sight to behold; sheeny silvers, greys and tans, somewhat reminiscent of Snow Gums. Hail lies sparkling among the leaf litter. Beside the track we come across a large mat of Prostrate or Mountain Geebung (*Personia chamaepitys*) dotted with bright yellow flowers, its light green foliage, moistened by the rain, shining. The crowning glory however is the hail embedded among the foliage; diamonds glittering in the sunshine.

Back at the cars we partake of a combined lunch / afternoon tea after a very pleasant, but at times adventurous walk, on which we saw many charming faces of the mountain bushland but also saw just how quickly conditions can change. A walk I am sure we will remember. (Driving back along the Bells Line of Road the hail was at least 200 millimetres deep for a distance of a few kilometres; the road had been closed earlier.)

Apologies to the professional meteorologists, their predictions certainly proved to be correct today.

Footnote, or lower leg note actually: Along the track down to the Wollangambe view, I got spiked in the lower leg by the end of a dead branch on a burnt shrub beside the track. Many thanks to Jenny Wilkins and Helen for dressing the wound, and to Carol Conway for supplying the bandages. As recommended Helen and I attended the Emergency Department at Lithgow Hospital where we received excellent and quick attention; five stitches and less than an hour later we were on our way with antibiotics tucked under the arm. Another very good experience in our public health system.

John Cardy

## **OUR DECEMBER WALK**

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2017**

**Open Woodland and Enclosed Rainforest****Knight – Brown Firetrail, The Ramparts and Kookootonga Firetrail at Mount Irvine**

This morning walk follows the Knight – Brown Firetrail which will lead us through open forest and pockets of rainforest. A diversion will take us to expansive views from The Ramparts and the firetrail will then deliver us back to the Mt Irvine Road at the tennis court. A short walk along the road will take us to the Kookootonga Firetrail which will lead us down through enclosed forest to Bowens Creek Road to return to the cars.

**Meet at the Mount Wilson Village Hall (opposite the Fire Station) at 8.45 for a 9.00am departure. Our first stop will be at the council depot area beside Bowens Creek Road just past its junction with Mt Irvine Road. There will be a car shuffle from here to take us to the start of the walk at the end of Mt Irvine Road.**

Bring morning tea only, lunch awaits at the Mt Wilson Village Hall; **see details below.**

**For this walk and/or the luncheon CONTACT HELEN & JOHN CARDY ONLY on 9871 3661 or mobile 0400 444 966. TO ASSIST WITH CATERING PLEASE BOOK IN BY SUNDAY 10<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER and, to avoid over and/or under supply, which of the shared food you would prefer to bring.**

**END OF YEAR / CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON**

To avoid having to transport tables and chairs etc and set up in Merry Garth gardens, this year our end of year / Christmas luncheon will be held in the Mt Wilson Village Hall. **The hall will be decorated to create a festive atmosphere for this event.**

**Ex-walkers, armchair walkers, family and friends are more than welcome. Libby has kindly invited any non-walkers who have time in the morning, or others after the luncheon, to wander through the beautiful gardens of Merry Garth.**

**Meet at the Mt Wilson Village Hall for lunch at 12.30pm.**

Cold turkey and ham will be supplied, please bring one of the following **to share**. Salads or savoury dishes (hot or cold) to go with the turkey and ham, slices to go with tea or coffee.

Mixed berries and ice-cream dessert, Tea and Coffee will be provided.

Please bring your own plates, cutlery, glasses and drinks.

Should you be bringing food for the luncheon you can give it to Helen at the Village Hall meeting place prior to the walk. Please bring your own esky or cooler bag.

**Should you need to leave a message after the evening of Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December do so on Helen's mobile only.**

**CAROL SERVICE**

The annual Carol Service will be held at St Georges Church Mt Wilson commencing at 7.30pm on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> December. Everyone is very welcome to attend this service and experience the ambience of this historic church in a charmingly different light.

**FUTURE WALKS** (Tentative schedule)

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2018 – A Mount Wilson Ramble: Lookouts and the Sunday Walk Spur.

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2018 – To be advised

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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.**

**8<sup>th</sup> December - meet at Wynne Reserve**

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

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