
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

Volume 28 Issue 2

February 2018

A MOUNT WILSON RAMBLE

TOPIC

OUR JANUARY WALK

**MT WILSON VILLAGE
PATHWAYS and
LOOKOUTS then the
RAINFOREST on the
WATERFALL TRACK.**

Friday 19th January 2018

Twenty-one walkers gathered at Merry Garth to hear Libby explain that, due to the very hot conditions expected, we would be taking a different path to that proposed; a route that would lead us along more shaded tracks. Come with us then as we wend our way along the lanes and byways of this unique village and venture into the adjoining bushland and rainforest; a little history will be thrown in along the way.

We welcomed Cynthia Burgess, a friend of Merren Dargan, who was joining us for the first time today; we also welcomed Ray Nesci's cousin Daniel Mamone who joined up to the group this morning. We were again under the very happy circumstance of having Libby back leading the group while I reverted to my usual position bringing up the rear.

We set off along Galwey then Davies Lane with the enchanting Wynstay rainforest on our left and the combined exotic and rainforest gardens of Merry Garth and Campanella Cottage on our right. What a magical narrow little byway this is. If you have never walked



Summer in the Bush

along here with the light swirling mists of winter enhancing the weeping fronds of the Tree Ferns or with the filtered spring sunlight illuminating the vast array of exotic blossoms, do yourself a favour and put it on your must do list. I think I may have stated previously, to my mind this is the most delightful little lane in Mount Wilson.

On reaching Mount Irvine Road we turn onto the Anniversary Walkway which was constructed to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the surveying

and naming of Mount Wilson in 1868. This walkway, elevated above the road, affords northerly views across the Blue Mountains National Park and Wollangambe and Wollomi Wilderness. On our left, sitting high on the hill, is the Wynstay homestead crouched behind its crenellated wall and the Turkish Bath nestled into the slope below that wall.

Soon we are at the Wynstay Gatekeeper's Lodge (c1890) and cross the road to Founders Corner. This park, on land donated by Richard Owen Wynne, grandson of Richard Wynne, was planted in 1932. A curved bench constructed from basalt was erected which carries a plaque to commemorate the ten founding pioneers who came to Mount Wilson between 1875 and 1880; this was unveiled in 1968 as part of Mt Wilson's Centenary celebrations.

We make our way along The Avenue, shaded by Plane Trees planted c1880 and the Horse Chestnuts and Beech planted c1920. We pass St Georges Church, built by the Clark family as a memorial to Henry Marcus Clark, following his unexpected death at his nearby Sefton Hall home in 1913; the church was consecrated in 1916.

Presently our numbers swell to twenty-six when we meet up with long-time member Helen Freeman, her daughter Mel and grand children Ryan, Jack and Lucy who are visiting from Melbourne. It is wonderful to have Helen walking with us once again after a long absence, as it is to have Mel and the children join us. It is many years since we have had youngsters walk with the group and what a delight it is; their youthful exuberance is contagious. (The last youngster I can remember is Ray Nesci's grandson Luke who proudly declared at the time that he was "eight, nearly nine"; he is now a fine young man.)

We then enter another of the little gems of Mt Wilson, the pathway through the Ferny Corner area. We duck under the massive vine which forms a fascinating portal across the path and continue on beside the moss-encrusted dry stone boundary wall. On reaching the War Memorial we turn onto Merewether Lane and make our way past an array of Soft Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) and a few Rough Tree Ferns (*Cyathea australis*). Rising out of the ground cover beside the track is a Hyacinth Orchid (*Dipodium punctatum*), racemes of red-spotted pink flowers held aloft on dark brown stems; these orchids are parasitic on the roots of surrounding vegetation.

We continue into tall open forest where ground ferns form a soft carpet of greenery and emerge onto a rocky outcrop where an amazing expansive view opens up; we settle down here for morning tea.

From this prominence we are looking across the vastness of the northern Blue Mountains National Park and the Newnes State Forest; a landscape dissected by the valleys and deep ravines carved by the Wollangambe River and

its tributaries. Further afield those valleys carved by Bungleboori, Dumbano and Yarramun Creeks and their many tributaries disappear into the distance. The whole landscape is studded with rock outcrops, spires, pagodas and windworn cliff faces. Merren Dargan notes three distant pagodas nestled in the head of a gully and wonders if they were the pagodas that we passed on the way to Lunch Rock on our November walk; a view through the zoom lens indicates that could well be the case.

We reluctantly turn our backs on this panorama and make our way along the Northern Firetrail; here the soft greens of the ground and tree fern fronds are framed by towering tree trunks, forming wonderful compartmentalised images beside the track. Soon we are on Du Faur's Rocks Road and head up the hill. Young Lucy was becoming a little leg weary and showing signs of that "are we there yet" syndrome until Simon Changson challenges her to a race toward the Fire Station and she took flight; Lucy won the challenge of course. At the Fire Station we bid farewell to Helen Freeman, daughter Mel and grandchildren Ryan, Jack and Lucy; it was a pleasure to have you all walking with us.

We continue along the road toward the zig zag and turn down to Silva Plana, emerge onto Queens Avenue and make our way to Gregson Park. We cross Waterfall Creek on the Jefferson Bridge; the dearth of water flowing under the bridge does not bode well for seeing the waterfalls at anywhere near their best, yet the coolness of the rainforest will be welcome. Indeed as the track leads us across the margin of the rainforest from the open woodland there is a decided and agreeable drop in temperature.

Of course in this shaded environment the vegetation changes immediately. Vines hang from the trees, looping under branches and spiralling up the trunks. On a leaning tree there is a line of glossy finger-shaped fronds of what I think is, what else, but the Finger Fern (*Grammitis billardierei*) pointing vertically above the sloping trunk. Above us the cartwheels of tree fern fronds carried high

on tall straight trunks appear as lacy sunshades. In these dry conditions the mosses are not at their best yet one vertical rock face is clothed in a bright green moss; a multitude of tiny overlapping fan-shaped plants hanging on the rock, a delight in the subdued shade. The track doubles back and drops us down to the base of the upper falls; we choose suitable rock perches on which to settle down for lunch.

The creek indeed is but a mere trickle, the face of the fall a dry basalt cliff face rather than the more usual face of cascading water; this is certainly the driest that I have seen this area in the twenty-two years I have walked with the group. Nonetheless it is still rather pleasant to spend some time here soaking up the cool atmosphere of this little grotto; the pleasure topped off with a slice of Libby's bushwalker cake; sated physically and psychologically we move on to complete the circle of the Waterfall Track.

We turn off at the track to the lower falls but find that access to the bottom of these falls has been blocked; access that was opened up about one hundred and twenty years ago, one wonders what prompted that.

As the track climbs away from the creek it zig zags around the huge trunks of a couple of fallen forest giants prone on the hillside, mosses and various fungi slowly breaking them down and returning them to the earth from whence they came. The canopy begins to thin and we are treated to tree ferns growing at crazy angles on the slope. Some tilting downhill then growing in a shallow s-bend to reach skyward once more, others growing in a single gentle curve to remain upright. More defiant ones simply grow vertically out of the hillside while others have surrendered to the forces of gravity and lie on the forest floor yet still turn their heads skyward to varying degrees of success.

Soon we are once again in open woodland and emerge into the picnic area of Waterfall Reserve. A short stroll up Waterfall Road and along Galwey Lane delivers us back to Merry Garth thus completing a very pleasant ramble

along just some of the laneways, byways and bush tracks of Mount Wilson.

To top off a very agreeable day we partake of our usual after walk cuppa on the Childrens Lawn of Merry Garth; many thanks Libby for your hospitality; what a wonderful setting in which to relax awhile before wending our way home after yet another marvellous walk.

A little history connected to this walk to finish. Merewether Lane, along which we walked this morning, was named for Edward Christopher Merewether.

He held several significant government positions in the colony and was Superintendent of the great Australian Agricultural Company. This company had interests in coal mining in the Newcastle area and he moved there; the modern Newcastle suburb of Merewether took his name.

After moving to Sydney he built Dennarque as a summer residence. Built between 1877 and 1880 it was the earliest sandstone home built in Mt Wilson. The Merewethers and their ten children (hey, there was no television back then) were regular summer residents for the next thirteen years; Edward Merewether died in 1893.

James Elliott Mann and his wife Flora purchased the property in 1894; unusually, part of the title was in Flora's name; a touch of women's lib way back then. The Manns had three sons and two daughters; one of their sons, Alfred, was killed in France in World War I. The land on which the War Memorial sits, which we passed earlier today, was donated by Flora Mann in 1919.

After WWI her daughter, Esme, (then Esme Burfitt) donated 4 acres, 2 roods and 2 perches of land on which annual cricket matches were played; they had become the social event of the year and she realised what a great benefit to the community this land provided. A quick mental calculation tells me that is about 1.83 hectares; by mental calculation I mean one which nearly drove me mental trying to get my head around roods and perches again. That

land is now the Silva Plana sporting field across which we walked today.

One of Esme Mann's favourite places on the mountain was the spot where we had morning tea; apparently she would spend many hours there relaxing and looking out to the magnificent views we experienced.

John Cardy

FOOTNOTE 1

This was the **three hundred and fiftieth walk for this group** since it was formed by Libby Raines and Mary Reynolds. Seventeen walkers attended the first walk on 17th May 1990 to the Tessellated Pavements. What a wonderful achievement Libby and Mary, to have started and nurtured a group which is about to enter its twenty-eighth year. During that time many different walkers, approaching six hundred, have experienced, with the group, the delights that these mountains have to offer; sincere thanks to you both.

FOOTNOTE 2

We have just had the group's Emergency Personal Locater Beacon, which is carried on each walk, refurbished and a new battery fitted by the manufacturer, GME, at a cost of \$199; this makes the unit compliant until December 2024.

OUR FEBRUARY WALK

Friday 16th February 2018

Wide Valley Vistas, Shady Creek Lines and Some Open Woodland.

The Nature Track and More at Wentworth Falls

The group last visited the Nature Track in February 2013; we will perhaps put a slightly different twist on the walk this time around. This is a medium grade circular walk of about 5 kilometres, mostly in sheltered areas, with descent and ascent of about 250 metres; the rewards are many and varied. We will start and finish at the Conservation Hut.

Meet at the Conservation Hut at the end of Fletcher Street in Wentworth Falls at

9.30am or at Merry Garth for an 8.30am departure.

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 16th March 2018 – The Glow Worm Tunnel and Pagodas on the Newnes Plateau

Friday 20th April 2018 – Mulheran's Masterpiece, The Kings Tableland Cliff Edge Track and Darwins Walk at Wentworth Falls

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.

9th February – Meet at Wynne Reserve

9th March – Meet at Hay Lane (Ferny Corner)

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 for details