
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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November 2018

LOCKLEY PYLON

TOPIC

OUR OCTOBER WALK

LOCKLEY PYLON off Mt
HAY ROAD north of LEURA

Friday 19th October 2018

A journalist who referred to himself as Redgum, a person who was prone to walkabout, but not of Aboriginal heritage, and an ichthyologist? All people who touched this walk in some way.

So settle back dear reader with a comforting coffee or a nice glass of red and come with us on this sublime walk to Lockley Pylon.

The 6.30 am weather report on Friday: heavy fog causing flight and ferry cancellations, fog widespread into the western suburbs and the mountains. Mindful of the extremely heavy fog we encountered on our November 2012 walk to Lockley Pylon, when vision was restricted to about six or seven metres, I began thinking of possible alternative venues.

As we set off from West Pennant Hills the fog was indeed quite heavy, nearing Penrith it appeared to be lifting slightly. As we continued into the mountains we were teased by glimpses of blue sky, then the grey murk returned. On arrival at our meeting place in Leura, lo and behold, we were greeted by a clear blue sky. Minor miracles do happen.

Eighteen walkers gathered here and condensed into five vehicles for the ten kilometre drive to



Spring in the Bush

the trackhead; many thanks to Jenny, Karin, Allan and Des who joined with my vehicle for the journey. (These vehicle rationalisations seem to be getting easier, not straining the brain so much.)

On the way to the starting point I was pleased to see that the road condition was not too bad; my passengers were pleased to see quite a few Waratahs (*Telopea speciosissima*) lighting up the bush; 'seen from afar' indeed.

Before setting off on our walk we welcomed back Helen

Freeman, a long time member who has not been able to join us on a regular walk for some time. We also welcomed Robyn Hyde, daughter of foundation members of the group, Ron and Helen Naylor; I am pleased to say that Robyn intends joining up as a member of the group. With those pleasant formalities completed, and with yours truly leading and Allan Cupitt acting as whip, we set off along the Lockley Pylon Track.

Initially the track provides that pleasant enclosed feeling with vegetation pressing in from both sides. Pink Spider Flowers (*Grevillea sericea*) dot the trackside foliage, spidery pink legs hanging from their stems. The most predominant flowers here however, as indeed they were throughout the heathland areas on this walk, were the Box-leaved Wax Flowers (*Philotheca buxifolius ssp obovatus*) formerly (up to 1998) *Eriostemon*. Their prolific pink buds opening to five brilliant

white petals, flowers clustered atop stems of tiny warty leaves covered in oil glands; spectacular small shrubs.

Soon we diverted off the main track to climb onto The Pinnacles formation, taking care along the way to avoid the prickly foliage of a Dagger Hakea (*Hakea teretifolia*), carrying many pointed beak-like seed pods, and pressing in on the narrow track. Various maps published between 1890 and 1942 referred to this formation as Rocky Points, Three Nob Hill and The Three Peaks. From here we could see that a thick white blanket of fog was still lying over the Cumberland Plains, the whiteness accentuated by the illuminating sunshine above.

We settled down for morning tea on this craggy vantage point. On the end of this formation is an interesting rock protrusion shaped like a wrap around armchair; though no one tested it for comfort. To the west we were looking across Fortress Creek to the line of Fortress Ridge; light green hanging swamps clung to the hillside. The view down the line of Fortress Creek led the eye across Govett Gorge to the stunning cliff faces beyond, stretching from Pulpit Rock along toward Perrys Lookdown; puffs of white cloud hung in the blue sky. To the east Mount Hay Road wended its way across the landscape of the Mount Hay Range to the rounded form of Mount Hay.

We scrambled down off The Pinnacles and rejoined the main track which led us across a small sandy saddle of heath. Here the trackside was decorated by a few examples of the Rush Lily or Vanilla Plant (*Sowerbaea juncea*) displaying dense clusters of small pinkish lilac flowers atop slender stems. Also present here were several Dog Rose or River Rose (*Bauera rubioides*), their bright pink flowers hanging shyly on their slim stalks.

A pleasant little bonus to leading the walk is that one sees quite a few skinks and geckos scurrying off the open track as my threatening shadow approaches, some of the geckos were incredibly tiny; don't know if this is their hatching season.

We then crested a small rise from which a distant view of Horseshoe Falls was on offer over the canopy of low vegetation and across the Govett Gorge; its copious flow, due to recent rainfall, forming a silver ribbon against the dark cliff face. We crossed a second saddle of heath which led us into open woodland as we began the gentle climb onto Mount Stead. Here the track led us past a few large carpets of bright green Prostrate or Mountain Geebung (*Persoonia chamaepitys*) accompanied by a few of its tall cousins, the Broadleaf Geebung (*Persoonia levis*) displaying its loose flaky bark which hides brilliant deep red bark beneath. We were also treated here to a multitude of pure white tiny starbursts of the Tick Bush (*Kunzea ambigua*), their fine filaments radiating from a circular centre.

It is here, atop Mount Stead high in the Blue Mountains, 920 metres above sea level, that we meet our ichthyologist; a rather unlikely venue at which to meet an expert on fish. Mount Stead is named after David George Stead who was a member of the Fisheries Commission in the early 1900s and published two books on the fish of Australia and the edible fish of New South Wales. He was however a keen naturalist and conservationist who was involved in the setting up of the Wild Life Preservation Society of Australia along with other conservation activities.

We dropped down off Mount Stead and once again were traversing open heathland. Here we encountered a few Blunt Leaf Heath (*Epacris obtusifolia*) displaying their white elongated bell-shaped flowers atop their stems. Also present were a few Pink Kunzea (*Kunzea capitata*), their fluffy flower heads illuminating the ground cover beside the track. (This genus is named after German botanist Gustav Kunze.)

From atop the next rise the track could be seen meandering across the sparse heath, adding a human scale to this vast landscape; makes one realise how small we are in the overall scheme of things. And there before us was our destination for the day; Lockley Pylon. From this perspective it has an elongated almost flat

top, from other angles it displays a conical shape.

To reach the summit of Lockley Pylon we took the track which winds its way around the flanks of the pylon rather than the more direct track straight up the eastern face. Along this track we were presented with our first view of Fortress Falls where the waters of Fortress Creek leap over the edge of the escarpment to drop down and join the waters of Govetts Creek. These falls appear to emerge out of a huge arched cave, but not so. Just another optical illusion on the cliffs of these gorges; the 'arch' is formed by the opposite cliff faces of the Fortress Creek canyon appearing to be a single opening.

Just a short climb further and we arrived at the stone cairn atop Lockley Pylon. What magnificent views were to be had from here on such a perfect day as this. The panorama to the south west and west stretched past the sheer cliffs below Fortress Hill across Govett Gorge to Griffith Taylor Wall, past Govetts Leap to Horseshoe Falls and on to Pulpit Rock. Then swinging to the north we were treated to a view taking in Clarke Head, Docker Head, across the Blue Gum Forest and Upper Grose Gorge to the cliffs of Banks Wall below Mount Banks, then Frank Hurley Head and Edgeworth David Head. Turning toward the east we saw Explorers Wall stretching below Mounts Caley, Strzelecki and Dixon along the line of Grose Gorge, across the line of the Grose River to the Mount Hay Wall below the rounded form of Mount Hay and The Butterbox. So many of the iconic features of these Blue Mountains are on show from this magnificent eyrie.

After adding a stone to the cairn, as is the custom, it was time to rest awhile and partake of lunch while absorbing just some of the haunting atmosphere of this very special place.

And here we meet the second person mentioned at the beginning of this newsletter. This pylon was named after John Gilmour Lockley, a journalist who wrote on bushwalking, conservation and horticulture under the name of Redgum for the Sydney

Morning Herald; he publicised the fight to save the Blue Gum Forest. Lockley was on the committee which negotiated the purchase of the land containing the Blue Gum Forest in November 1931. He was very highly thought of in bushwalking, conservation and gardening circles and was made an honorary member of the Sydney Bush Walkers for his help in the Blue Gum Forest campaign. Two trees were planted by gardening enthusiasts at the Koala Park at West Pennant Hills in his memory after his death in 1937. He was a modest man and when speaking of his achievements would say words along the lines of "Compared to others I have done little really, but the others have not got a pylon".

How appropriate that the pylon which carries his name overlooks the Lockley Track which drops over Du Faur Head and follows the Du Faur Buttress down to the Blue Gum Forest. And how lucky we are that people had the vision back then to fight to protect so many features of these mountains; the fight goes on.

We spent some time atop the pylon taking in the smorgasbord of views on offer and checking out the vegetation which dares to fight the powerful winds which sweep across this location. There were some Broad Leaf Drumsticks (*Isopogon anemonifolius*) just coming into flower, keeping a really low profile in this very blustery environment.

Soon it was time to leave this vantage point, although with some reluctance. We decided to take the more direct path down from the summit. As we commenced our descent we noticed Helen Freeman and Robyn Hyde sitting near the base of the pylon taking advantage of the sunny position out of the wind to have lunch. This image really gave scale to the expansive scene; two tiny figures mere dots in the vast landscape, with the track winding its way into the distance.

The day was warming up by now and gave credence to the note on some bushwalking texts that full summer sun should be avoided on this walk. As is usual on 'there and back' walks some features missed on the outward journey are picked up on the return journey; a

couple of Waratahs (*Telopea speciosissima*) which I missed earlier stood out in all their glory.

Back at The Pinnacles we continued along the main track rather than climb onto this feature. We passed a stunning example of a Grass Tree (*Xanthorrhoea sp*), not carrying a scape at this time but its abundant long narrow leaves hung in a weeping fashion cascading gracefully almost to ground level; a sight to behold.

Presently we were back at the cars after a wonderful walk which took us to a spot that has perhaps the most spectacular views in these mountains; yet another great day exploring the Blue Mountains. I do hope dear readers that you have enjoyed it as much as we did.

And what, you may well ask, of the third person mentioned at the start of the newsletter, the person who was prone to walkabout but not of Aboriginal heritage? The area we walked through today was on the Lycon Plateau, a name suggested by Myles Dunphy. It is after a Greek peripatetic philosopher of the third century BC. Lycon would walk about the Lycaeum, among those in attendance, while philosophising to anyone who cared to listen; peripatetic meaning to walk about. Perhaps those present were trying to escape his sermonising.

John Cardy

OUR NOVEMBER WALK

FRIDAY 16th NOVEMBER 2018

Wide Open Panoramas, Narrow Enclosed Canyons, Ferny Glens, Cascades, Waterfalls

The Grand Canyon at Blackheath

This is one of the classic Blue Mountains walks; the group last visited this jewel of the mountains in October 2014. This is a medium grade circuit walk of about 6 kilometres with a descent and subsequent ascent of about 350 metres. There is a rather steep climb in fairly open country from Neates Glen back to Evans Lookout Road to finish this walk.

Meet at Karin Kirkpatrick's place, 170 Evans Lookout Road, Blackheath at 9.30am. There is plenty of parking space on the verge outside of Karin's place; we will start and finish the walk here. Karin has kindly invited us to afternoon tea at her home following the walk. For those wishing to car share from Mt Wilson meet at St Georges Church for an 8.45am departure.

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

Contact Helen and John Cardy on 9871 3661 or on mobile 0400 444 966.

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 7th December – Sunday Walk Spur and Bogey Holes at Mt Wilson then our end of year Xmas lunch at the Mt Wilson Village Hall

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.

Friday 9th November at Wynne Reserve

Friday 14th December at Wynne Reserve

Mt Wilson contact Alice Simpson 0414 425 511 or 4756 2110

Council contact Tracy Abbas 0428 777 141