
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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MULHERANS TRACK AND ASGARD SWAMP

TOPIC

OUR JULY WALK

**DARWINS WALK, ROCKET
POINT and MULHERANS
CLIFF EDGE TRACK to
LINCOLNS ROCK on the
KINGS TABLELAND**

Friday 20th July 2018

The twenty-four walkers who gathered at Wilson Park in Wentworth Falls were greeted by rather bracing windy weather, ideal for a little vigorous walking to warm the body. It was a great pleasure today to have Libby's son Peter and her infant grandsons join us; Bill is about five years old and Jack around three years old. We also welcomed Delancey Meskill, a relative of Micheal Ihm visiting from Texas; a delightful young lady.

Led by Freda Moxom with yours truly taking up my usual position as whip, we set off along Darwins Walk under a blue sky, though clouds were threatening which did deliver a few brief squally showers (sleet?) but nothing of consequence. We were somewhat protected from the wind along this gully. Young Jack declared he was tired before we had even started so he was carried 'papoose style' by Peter, for the entire walk as it turned out; young Bill however bounced along under his own steam for the full ten kilometres; what boundless energy of the young.

Charles Darwin made a side trip along this creek on 17th January 1836 during his journey



Winter and Spring in the Bush

to Bathurst while the Beagle was berthed in Sydney. He wrote in his note book; "----- suddenly & without any preparation, through the trees, which border the pathway; an immense gulf is seen at the depth of perhaps 1500 ft beneath ones feet. Walking a few yards farther; one stands on the brink of a great precipice. -----" This was part of Darwin's first impressions on sighting Wentworth Falls.

We were treated to the soothing sound of rippling water purling along between fern shrouded

banks and gurgling across rock shelves; forming sparkling white mini-cascades dropping over rock ledges and glassy eddies flowing across sloping bedrock. Soon we arrived at a clear shallow pool tucked under a large rock overhang, lined by a pebbly beach and fed by a small silvery cascade; we paused here for morning tea.

Continuing on we passed several more cascades; some splashing over rock ledges, others sluicing silently over fern-lined furrows, and arrived at Weeping Rock. The track here has only recently reopened; the old corroded steel stairway having been replaced by sandstone steps; not far downstream from here a small plaque high on the rock face beside the track declares Charles Darwin did indeed pass this way.

Presently we were at the top of Wentworth Falls, the waters of Jamison Creek flowing

over the Queens Cascade, across the Golden Sands and between the stepping stones at the top of the falls before plunging over the cliff edge to the valley floor; the first drop being 110 metres, the second 48 metres.

We then made our way up to and through the Arch Cave and down to Rocket Point Lookout. Magnificent views were to be had from here of the upper drop of the falls and the cliffs lining the valley. There was a good view upstream of the historic house Yester Grange, built in the late 1800s; it was once owned by Sir John See, Premier of NSW from 1901 to 1904.

The stone wall at this lookout was built by Peter Mulheran, as were many of the walking tracks and walls guarding other lookouts in the Wentworth Falls area. We were now to follow what is regarded as his masterpiece, the Kings Tableland Cliff Edge Track, constructed in the 1890s.

Due to lack of maintenance this track became overgrown and was lost for many years. In 1981 bushwalker, historian, author and conservationist Jim Smith enlisted the help of some like-minded friends and the track was sensitively resurrected; it is only regular use that keeps it open today.

We made our way up the Loop Track and turned right onto Mulheran's Masterpiece, proceeded along Allocasuarina Alley brushing past the Black She Oaks (*Allocasuarina littoralis*) pressing in from both sides and paused at Annie's Picnic Rock, named for Peter Mulheran's wife. Here Freda took young Bill and Jack back a short distance to show them a cave near the track. Carrying on we ducked and stooped as we negotiated the Leprechaun Tunnels formed by overarching vegetation, the name recognising Mulheran's Celtic origins and dropped down to the rock promontory which is Te Willa Lookout; Mulheran gave this name to his house in Wentworth Falls.

What splendid views are on offer from this eyrie, perhaps the most spectacular in the mountains. The magnificent cliff lines rising above the talus slopes, those on the imposing

form of Mount Solitary displaying the marks of the recent hazard reduction burn. The lush vegetation along the line of Valley of the Waters Creek contrasts with the more exposed vegetation as it drops deep into the valley. There is a view of Vera Falls, this being one of the few, if not the only point, from which the full drop of these falls can be seen.

We then climbed up to Little Switzerland Drive which led us to Lincoln's Rock, named after Lincoln Hall the Australian mountaineer who lived near here for about twenty years. This expansive rock platform, also previously known as Flat Rock and Sunset Rock, is an unfenced lookout which affords impressive views into and across the valley to distant peaks past Mount Solitary.

Here we were exposed to strong winds but found shelter on lower areas of the shelf to settle down for lunch in the warming sunlight; John Maule found a settee shaped formation on which to lounge while lunching. Libby's Bushwalker Cake was distributed by Freda who had baked it for this walk; many thanks Freda, it was delicious.

We returned via Little Switzerland Drive and the Loop Track to the top of Wentworth Falls. Here the strong winds were blowing the waters of the falls high into the air; an impressive sight indeed.

We then made our way back along Darwins Walk and moved on to Freda's place for a sumptuous afternoon tea on her front deck; Mary Reynolds, co-founder of this Walking Group, met us here. Many thanks Freda for leading the walk, for your hospitality and providing the sandwiches and pastries, all very much appreciated. A delightful way to end yet another wonderful walk on which we explored a new track for the group - Mulheran's Masterpiece.

John Cardy

OUR AUGUST WALK

ASGARD SWAMP, THOR HEAD and SURROUNDS at MT VICTORIA

Friday 17th August 2018

There is fine weather, there is good weather, then there is glorious weather such as greeted the eighteen walkers who gathered on Victoria Falls Road for this walk. I strained the brain to organise a vehicle rationalisation, a task that Libby seemed to cope with so effortlessly, and we set off on the drive to our starting point. Following a slight overshoot due to the sign indicating the Asgard Swamp Track having been removed, we parked at the gate and began our walk. Many thanks Freda for once again leading the walk; my present level of fitness makes my usual position as whip ideal.

As we descended the hill there is evidence on the rock platforms of benching for the proposed tramway to take coal mined from the seam between Asgard Head and Thor Head, and coke, to Mount Victoria; more on that later.

The deep golden blossom of the Sunshine Wattle (*Acacia terminalis*) illuminated the bushland along the track; this however was but a foretaste of what was to come. We crossed the sedge-lined Asgard Brook, balancing on a raft of logs and continued on past some magnificent Scribbly Gums (*Eucalyptus sclerophylla*) one displaying unusual horizontal folds near its base, others carrying deep blackened scars from bushfires, yet still growing strongly.

We arrived at Asgard Swamp and paused here for morning tea, most choosing to take up seats on Pagoda Rock, a large outcrop beside the swamp. Ray Nesci handed around slices of Libby's Bushwalker Cake, baked by his wife Rose, and all agreed it was very close to Libby's version; thank you Rose, you may well have a permanent job.

We took the track out onto the swamp area to get an appreciation of its grandeur. A wide expanse of light tan-coloured sedges bounded on one side by a line of sculptural Scribbly Gums, trunks and branches askew, and on the other by a magnificent display of Sunshine

Wattle, large mounds of gold circling the edge of the swamp. Dotted among the sedges were a few Heath Banksias (*Banksia ericifolia*) carrying their orange-red flower spikes, and a few examples of the Coral Heath (*Epacris microphylla*) displaying their abundant tiny white flowers along vertical stems.

We then moved on and took a track off to the left which leads to Thor Head. A short distance along this track are the remains of a house associated with the mining activity in the area. A low mound of roughly dressed sandstone blocks, some with arched segments hewn into them, and scattered bricks; forlorn reminders of hopes and dreams of the late 1800s.

Soon we were at a rock platform just below Thor Head and an amazing panorama of the Upper Grose opened up; stunning vertical cliffs and talus slopes leading down to the Grose River which carved, and continues to do so, this spectacular chasm. We then made our way to the summit of Thor Head from which the view of the Upper Grose is even more stunning, if such is possible; on the southern side of the head is an almost aerial view back to Asgard Swamp from whence we came.

We returned to the main track where most decided to go with Freda to the Mackenzie Coal Mine while a few elected to return to Pagoda Rock.

Walter Mackenzie and his brother John, sons of a coal mine owner in the north of England, came to Australia in about 1862. They discovered seams of oil shale and claimed they were viable, however they were never worked. John Mackenzie returned to government employment and Walter became involved with a politician and businessman of dubious repute. (Sound familiar?) The coal mine is one of six adits driven into the coal seam between Asgard and Thor Heads at the direction of Walter Mackenzie and Thomas Garret around 1881.

Walter Mackenzie died in 1886 and R Sands and Company took over the leases. It was this company which proposed building a tramway to Mt Victoria and built the finely constructed

coke oven near the adit. It has been stated some excellent coke was made in this oven, though there is conjecture that it was in fact never used. The whole venture never really got off the ground, probably due to the downturn in the economy in the late 1880s.

Today the mine is a dark dank tunnel only a little over a metre in height and not much wider; mosses grow on the walls near the entrance and tiny orange stalactites formed by seepage hang from the ceiling. These tunnels hold a strange fascination, beckoning to be explored. On a previous visit here in 2011, Fred Roberts, who worked in mines for many years, warned of the danger of blackdamp in unventilated shafts, air in which oxygen has been replaced by carbon dioxide and can quickly prove fatal.

Presently we were all reunited back at Pagoda Rock for lunch. Carol Conway distributed her version of Libby's Bushwalker Cake and a fine reproduction it was; the experimentation by many is paying dividends.

Anne Mikkelsen then guided us to a nearby rock overhang where there is a quite distinct Aboriginal hand stencil and a faded partial one; Anne remembered their existence from some years ago and checked out their location during lunch. Rich resources of food, nearby deposits of the mineral chert, used to fashion cutting and scraping tools and a relatively favourable climate made this area a prime occupational site for Aboriginals. Many thanks Anne for this added attraction to the walk.

A special note to finish. Carol Conway had wrapped her bushwalker cake in a tea towel which carried the following quote from Marcel Proust: "Let us be grateful to people who make us happy. They are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom." What a charming and deeply appropriate tribute to Libby.

John Cardy

OUR SEPTEMBER WALK

Friday 21st September 2018

Indigenous Rock Art, Stunning Views, Perhaps a Glimpse of Indiana Jones

Mayinygu Marragu (Blackfellows Hand Rock) to the Temple of Doom on the Newnes Plateau

The group last visited this venue in February 2015. This relatively easy walk of about 7 kms offers Aboriginal rock art, great views and an array of pagodas; a walk not to be missed.

There will be a vehicle rationalisation at our meeting point at Lithgow for the 23 kilometre drive, on sealed roads, to our start point.

Meet at 9.30am in the Coles Car Park (Bent Street or St Patrick's Primary School end) of the Lithgow Valley Shopping Centre. For those wishing to car share from Mt Wilson meet at St Georges Church at 8.50am for a 9.00am departure.

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

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

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 19th October 2018 – Lockley Pylon

Friday 16th November 2018 – Grand Canyon

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 14th September at Sloan Reserve

Friday 12th October at Sloan Reserve

Mt Wilson contact Alice Simpson 0414 425 511 or 4756 2110

Council contact Tracy Abbas 0428 777 141