
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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DARWINS WALK AND UNDER/ OVERCLIFF

TOPIC

OUR FEBRUARY WALK

DARWINS WALK and the
UNDERCLIFF and
OVERCLIFF TRACKS at
WENTWORTH FALLS

Friday 15th February 2019

A little bit of serendipity as nineteen walkers gathered in Wilson Park to commence this walk by setting off along Darwins Walk; it was just three days after the two hundred and tenth anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth in Shrewsbury, England on 12th February 1809.

In December 1831, Darwin, just short of his 23rd birthday, set out aboard HMS Beagle on what was to be a 5-year voyage around the world. On 12th January 1836, just one month before Darwin's 27th birthday, HMS Beagle anchored in Sydney Cove; it was to be a two-month stay.

On 16th January Darwin left Sydney to travel to Bathurst, he arrived at the Weatherboard Inn (Wentworth Falls) on 17th January. While the horses were attended to Darwin walked along the little creek which flowed past the Inn and was astounded by the view into the valley. He wrote in his diary "*Following down a little valley & its tiny rill of water, suddenly & without any preparation, through the trees, which border the pathway; an immense gulf is seen at the depth of perhaps 1500ft beneath*



Autumn in the Bush

ones feet." So it appears even then there was a pathway along the creek used by early tourists. The view must have really made an impression on Darwin for he re-walked the path six days later on his return from Bathurst when he stayed at the Weatherboard Inn; for three nights as it turned out as the following day, 24th, he was ill and then the weather turned bad. (Those wishing to see where the Weatherboard Inn once stood can find the spot marked by a large evergreen oak in the north east corner of Pitt Park, close to the railway

line.)

And so, after Allan and Jeanie Cupitt's neighbour Bruce Dawkins signed up as a member, welcome Bruce, we set off, led by Freda, to follow in the footsteps of Charles Darwin of one hundred and eighty three years ago.

We dropped down to and crossed Jamison Creek which is fed by the overflow from Wentworth Falls Lake. Here the creek is quite narrow and is fringed by masses of bright green Pouched Coral Fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*). The banks of fern were illuminated by the brilliant orange flowers of Montbretia (*Crocsmia x crocosmiiflora*). Though they made a very attractive display on the green background, they are an invasive escapee from gardens; like most weeds which become a problem in the bush they are grown in gardens because of their showy flowers.

The rhythmic babbling and burbling of the water sluicing across rock faces and dropping over ledges into shallow pools entertained us as we followed the creekline. A bridge took us across the creek for a sixth time and we paused awhile at a large rock overhang where the creek cascades into a shallow pool and flows on over a bed of pebbles beside a shaded sandbank.

The track then led through a small grove of mature conifers, again garden escapees or perhaps deliberately planted here many years ago. Nearby there were examples of the *Grevillea acanthifolia ssp acanthifolia* displaying pinkish red flower combs held aloft brush-like on the upper side of the stems; these shrubs flower mainly in spring but some have extended flowering and are thus favoured by honeyeating birds.

We passed a couple of small waterfalls dropping into sandy-bottomed pools and soon descended the recently refurbished stairs to the area below Weeping Rock. The 1879 Railway Guide of New South Wales states: "The whole of the rocky ledge which overlooks the gorge is public property, but some of the land in the vicinity has already been alienated. 'The Weeping Rock', for instance, is on private property, belonging to Mr. D. Fletcher, of Sydney. This 'weeping rock', an object of great interest to those who visit the Weatherboard, stands above the 'Great Fall,' on the east side of the Gorge, and well deserves the name which has been given to it. The continuous flow of water which trickles over this curious half isolated mass of stone is occasioned by a rivulet breaking away from the main stream, known as *Jamison's Creek* – the same which feeds the Great Fall, or Campbell's Cataract."

We paused here for morning tea in this sun drenched little alcove, some choosing to sit with a view back to the falling water while others settled down on the rocky outcrop between the pools and streamlets of water.

We continued on, passing a plaque high on the rock face beside the track, which declared that

"CHARLES DARWIN PASSED THIS WAY 1836".

Sometimes, from my position as whip, keeping the group together is a little like pulling teeth but soon we all regrouped, appropriately, at Fletchers Lookout, named after David Fletcher, a Sydney dentist who owned land in the area; he was the first Mayor of Waverley in 1868. This lookout has three small viewing platforms, which give views down the face of Wentworth Falls. Here we also had our first views into the Jamison Valley, framed on the left by the cliffs below Rocket Point Lookout, and on the right by Sublime Point; with Mount Solitary 7km away and Narrow Neck Peninsula 14km away in the distance.

It could never be said that you have had your fill of the near and distant views from this eyrie, but one must move on, and we continued along the path variously known as the Undercliff Walk or Undercliff Track. This descriptively named track was constructed in the 1880s with a large input from Peter Mulheran, as evidenced by his signature stone walls at the various lookouts along the way.

This path led us past golden cliff faces and below deep rock overhangs. Not far along the track there was a view back to Wentworth Falls, a front on view of the upper section of the falls; people on the stepping stones at the top of the falls appearing as miniature marionettes in this vast landscape.

Speaking of things hanging from cables we were led on a short diversion to view a derrick which was used to lower equipment down to the National Pass during its construction between 1906 and 1908. This piece of equipment is in remarkably good condition considering it has been sitting in the bush for around one hundred and thirteen years; a very interesting historic relic of track building in the mountains.

We continued on to the junction of the Den Fenella Track where our route became the Overcliff Walk / Track. Construction of this descriptively named track began in the mid 1880s. As we climbed toward the turn off to

the now closed Lady See Lookout we passed a Smooth-barked Apple or Red Gum (*Angophora costata*), its recently exposed new bark a glowing ochre colour.

Soon we were at the Breakfast Point Lookout opposite the track which leads uphill to the Short Cut Track. Again there were expansive views on offer here, from the majestic Kedumba Walls and the slash of white of the exposed surface of Lincolns Rock. Then down the talus slopes to the line of Jamison Creek as it wends its way through Prince Regents Glen and across to the cliffs below Inspiration Point and Sublime Point, with the dominating presence of Mount Solitary in the middle distance.

As is usual with Mother Nature, among all the grandeur there are tiny gems to enjoy. Ray Nesci noticed a skink resting at the outside base of the Peter Mulheran stone wall at this lookout. The banding on its body and scattered white spots on its head indicated it was possibly a Cunningham's Skink. It was totally unfazed by the two sets of eyes peering at it from above.

A little further along the track there was a lone Grass Leaf Trigger Plant (*Stylidium graminifolium*) displaying a stem of bright pink flowers. These plants usually flower from October to December; this one obviously wasn't paying attention when those directions were given.

We squelched our way across the face of some hanging swamps, weaving between large bags of sandstone blocks and rubble lowered in by helicopter in preparation for some long overdue track refurbishment; at last some money has been made available for track maintenance, can anyone feel an election coming on.

Seeing these bags of masonry and bundles of pipes for handrails along both the Under and Overcliffs highlighted the stark contrast of today's track building with the days when the derrick we visited was used to manhandle equipment and materials into position.

Soon we arrived at the Lyrebird Lookout where we took in the views into the Valley of the Waters before making the climb up to the Conservation Hut. We then made our way along the old Pipeline Track section of the Nature Track until Freda's local knowledge had us divert onto a grassy slope, then we popped out onto Armstrong Street, diverted once more into Wentworth Falls Cemetery and we were soon at Freda's place.

A little aside; as we were walking through the cemetery I was reminded of one of Billy Connolly's tours of Great Britain TV shows where he visited a cemetery in Ireland and the Catholic and Protestant areas were divided by a six-foot high stone wall. Curious enough, but he discovered that the wall extended six-foot underground. Billy's comments were of course unprintable here but it was obvious they didn't want to risk any inter-denominational grave hopping.

Back to a little sanity. Freda had most kindly invited the group to have our lunch at her lovely home. She had set out chairs in the shade on her front lawn, provided tea and coffee, a couple of delicious iced buns and even chocolates; my better half Helen had cooked her latest version of Libby's bushwalker cake and all agreed it was the closest yet (see details below). I can't imagine a more pleasant way to end our bushwalk. Many many thanks to you Freda for the planning and leading of this walk and for your generous hospitality.

John Cardy

Libby's Bushwalker Cake Update

Libby's bushwalker cake was a very enjoyable tradition for each month's walk; she really looked after us.

Many of us have tried to cook the cake "just like Libby's"; all very good but "not like Libby's".

After about eight attempts from me I think we have a cake "nearly like Libby's". Have a try.

Add together

1 cup of milk

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1 cup of chopped dates
1 cup of chopped apricots
1 cup of sultanas
Refrigerate for 1 day, then add
1 cup of self raising flour
1 cup of brown sugar
1 cup of oat bran
1 cup of milk
Mix together and place in lined loaf tin
Slow oven 160° for about 1¼ hours
Good luck, let me know, Helen Cardy

VALE GEOFF KELLY

A long time member of the Group, Geoff passed away on the 27th January 2019. Geoff joined the Group, along with his friend Fred Roberts, on the 15th February 2002; we walked to the Leura Cascades and Falls, Leura Forest and up Furber Steps on that day, walk number 165 for the Group. Geoff became a staunch supporter of the group, rarely missing a walk; he often provided photographs taken on the walks to Mary Reynolds to be included in the newsletters when she produced them. When fitness prevented him from participating in walks he remained a member as an armchair walker right up to his passing. He also regularly attended the Christmas luncheons during this time; the last being in December 2018. Geoff was devoted to his grandson Thomas with whom he spent a great deal of time. Geoff had a very personable nature; he will be sadly missed. RIP Geoff.

OUR MARCH WALK

FRIDAY 15th MARCH 2019

A Ridge Top Walk to Panoramic Views

Odin Head at Mt Victoria

This is a new venue for the Group. It is a relatively easy walk of about 6 kilometres return. It will take us through open woodland and heath to spectacular views of the Upper Grose Valley.

Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

Meet at 10.00am at the old Mt Victoria Cemetery off Victoria Falls Road. The unsignposted road to the cemetery is on the left only a little over 100 metres from the Great Western Highway along Victoria Falls Road. There we may have a vehicle rationalisation for the short drive of about 1.5 kilometres to the trackhead.

Those wishing to car share from Mt Wilson should meet at St Georges Church for a 9.15am departure.

Because it is only a short walk BRING LUNCH ONLY and perhaps a snack to have before we start or during the walk. Remember to bring PLENTY OF WATER.

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

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 5th April. **NB: This is the FIRST FRIDAY in April**– Victory Track and Sassafras Gully Track, Faulconbridge to Springwood.

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 8th March at Hay Lane – Ferny Corner – Planting

Friday 12th April at Hay Lane – Sloane Reserve

Mt Wilson contact Alice Simpson 0414 425 511 or 4756 2110

Council contact Tracy Abbas 0428 777 141