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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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WALKS BELOW THE HYDRO MAJESTIC

TOPIC

## OUR MAY WALK

WALKS below the HYDRO MAJESTIC: WONDERLAND TRACK, MARKS TOMB and THREE BROTHERS at MEDLOW BATH

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2019

Such disparate things as a plain in ancient Greece, 18 footers racing on Sydney Harbour and a Spanish lady touch this walk. Read on dear reader and all will be revealed.

Our intended walk for today was to be to Castle Head on the Narrow Neck Plateau; the running of an ultra marathon in that area put paid to that. Now, the word 'marathon' derives from the plain of Marathon in Greece where the Athenians defeated the Persians in 490 BC; a runner delivered the news to Athens, about forty kilometres away. I had to admit defeat and deliver the news to the group when they gathered at Narrow Neck Lookout that because of the proposed running of the marathon we had to change the venue for our walk. I'm sure contestants in the marathon would have suffered from aching limbs; their causing our walk to be relocated was a pain in another part of the anatomy. But we are a very flexible group and drove to Medlow Bath to commence our alternative walk; it is always good to have a Plan B.

Twelve walkers regathered at the corner of Belgravia and Station Streets; today we



Winter in the Bush

welcomed Noel Rath who signed up as a member before we set off.

A short walk along Belgravia Street past exotic trees and shrubs dressed in their kaleidoscope of autumn colours, brilliantly highlighted by the morning sun, led us to the start of the track which took us into open woodland. As we descended there were occasional glimpses through the trees of the cliffline below the Double Echo Point area on Shipley Plateau; a tantalising foretaste of the views to come.

Soon we reached a fork in the track and veered left to arrive at The Sunbath. This circular structure, about 5 metres in diameter and half a metre deep once contained a sandy base and was surrounded by a brush box privacy screen; ladies and gentlemen, guests of the Hydro Majestic, were segregated and allocated specific times in which each gender could sunbathe. There were several old conifers near The Sunbath with intriguing mosaic-like bark patterns; one tree carried a metal sign which apparently once pointed the way to the nearby Sunbath Lookout, but it is now illegible.

On the right of the path is a Satin Bowerbird's arched bower surrounded by blue enticements to attract females. In past years there was a bower further down the track on the left-hand side; this is now abandoned. Is the new bower for a new bird on the block or has the original bird decided to move onto more exclusive real estate?

We moved onto the Sunbath Lookout which affords magnificent views into the Megalong Valley. On the far side are the cliffs below Hargraves Lookout and beyond, on the near side are the cliffs below Radiata Plateau; the proposed venue for our July walk. Between these two sandstone prominences the Megalong Road threads its way through open pastures and woodland, with the mirrored waters of the occasional farm dam glinting in the sunlight; a sublime bucolic scene.

We paused here for morning tea. My better half Helen distributed slices of the latest version of Libby's bushwalker cake; all agreed that we have finally come very close to duplicating Libby's recipe. Tomorrow being the anniversary of Libby's Thanksgiving and Remembrance Service we had a minute silence to think of her and reflect on her very considerable contributions to this walking group. It was a most appropriate spot to do this as I, and I'm sure others in the group, recall images of Libby sitting in places such as this absorbing the beauty surrounding her; a classic picture of someone at peace with the world.

Next we set off along the Glen Rosa Track which winds its way south east along the escarpment to a spot where close views of some sheer cliffs are gained and there is a view down into Glen Rosa. Glen Rosa is believed to be named after a Spanish lady who once worked at the Hydro Majestic. Initially this track led us past some tall eucalypts spearing up from the gully but soon we were in thick heath and the vegetation began closing in on the path, eventually it became impassable so we retraced our steps back to The Sunbath.

We then climbed a short distance back up the track we initially descended and turned left onto the Wonderland Track; the name was derived from Mark Foy's Wonderland Estate.

Along this track there were several wonderful examples of the Hairpin Banksia (*Banksia spinulosa*) displaying fresh golden yellow flower spikes with glossy black styles; thus the name 'hairpin'. Almost right along this track

were examples of the Red Five Corners (*Styphelia tubiflora*) carrying clusters of gently curving tubular red flowers with protruding stamens.

Soon we came to a pierced metal sign high on a tree pointing the way to Marks Tomb. The junction was also marked by a small cairn and an artistically arranged grouping of slices of the flower spikes of Banksias; the slices presumably left after feeding by birds, as there were lots of them at the bases of shrubs along the way.

A short distance down this sidetrack we came to a large domed rock outcrop with three arched entrances and a skylight; we had arrived at Marks Tomb. The mortal remains of Mark Foy, who set up the Hydro Majestic as a hydrophatic resort do not however rest here.

Mark Foy stated in his will that a tomb should be constructed at Medlow Bath; provision being made for six caskets. The floor to be slabbed with thick billiard table quality slate and the tomb to be surrounded by an eleven foot high wall with a strong iron-barred gate for its entrance. An acre of land surrounding to be fenced with two barbed wire fences eleven foot apart; the space between to be planted with native shrubs. £32,000 was allocated for its construction from his estate, which was valued for probate at £68,981.

Mark Foy, in the early hours of the morning of 15<sup>th</sup> November 1950, went to investigate a noise in the garden of his Bayview cottage. He fell, was badly injured and was admitted to hospital; he died that night - aged 85. He was interred in the family crypt at South Head Cemetery. On 29<sup>th</sup> October 1951 the Equity Court released the family from the direction in the will that a tomb be built at Medlow Bath. Though his mortal remains were never returned to the mountains his spirit could perhaps be content hovering around South Head for Mark Foy founded the Sydney Flying Squadron in 1890 to popularise sailing on Sydney Harbour and his efforts resulted in the establishment of the now famous 18 Footers.

Back on the Wonderland Track we continued north; as the track hugged closer to the hillside there were little nooks and crannies of moss beside the path. Soon we were back on Station Street which is part of the Great Blue Mountains Trail, the first stage of which runs from Katoomba to Blackheath; this trail led us back to the cars. Here four walkers decided to call it a day while the remainder carried on past the Hydro Majestic to Bellevue Crescent. We then followed the fire trail down hill to a track on the left which took us to the Three Brothers formation.

This formation of three joined pagodas was of course named with reference to the Three Sisters at Katoomba. The Brothers are about five metres high but it is difficult to get a clear view of them. A path to the right led us around a small gully past the side of the Brothers to a rock ledge which afforded us great views into and across the Megalong; we paused here for lunch.

Following our alfresco repast while absorbing the magnitude and spectacle of the panorama before us, we bid the Brothers farewell and made our way around to the landing point for the flying fox from the Valley Farm. The flying fox delivered produce from the farm in the Megalong Valley for use in the Hydro Majestic and took kitchen scraps back down to the farm to feed the pigs; Mark Foy was a very innovative entrepreneur. The remains of two anchor points for the winding engine of the flying fox are still present here and a levelled rock ledge with steps is located nearby. When Fred Roberts and I were in this area in June 2013 on a check walk there was a large cast iron rope pulley with a steel shaft lying beside the rock ledge. The pulley, about one metre in diameter, had six beautifully curved spokes; a design function to prevent stress cracks of the spokes during the casting process. Perhaps the pulley and shaft now rest in the museum area of the Hydro.

From near where these relics once laid, a large dark fern-fringed cave can be seen dominating the hillside above the Glen Rosa Track; this is Maxines Bower, named after Mark and

Elizabeth Foy's eldest daughter, Maxine Dominica born in 1902.

Also visible from this spot is the site of a rock fall/landslide, which occurred in October 2016. It appears to me to be located on the last corner of the 'Coliseum' Track where you enter the rainforest area. The whole of the cliff above the track in that area has collapsed, leaving a sheer vertical face of pristine sandstone; the remaining face, so straight and clean, appearing as though it has been sliced by the sword of some powerful behemoth. The resulting rubble adding another layer to the talus as the slow yet relentless erosion of the plateau continues.

And so we made our way back along the fire trail to the highway and back past the Hydro Majestic. This cliff top edifice was created by Mark Foy in the early 1900s and opened in a snowstorm in 1904. Its recent sensitive refurbishment has returned some of the glitz and glamour of those early days; I feel sure Mark would have been quite chuffed.

John Cardy

**As I will most likely not be in a position to prepare and distribute a July Newsletter, I have included the walk details and meeting places and times for both the June and July walks in this issue. Many thanks to Freda, Karin and Ann for suggesting and checking out these venues.**

## OUR JUNE WALK

FRIDAY 21<sup>st</sup> JUNE 2019

**Open Woodland and Heath, High Vantage Points, Valley Views, Intriguing Pagoda Formations.**

### Jinki Ridge off the Bells Line of Road

The Group last visited this venue in December 2010. A short gentle walk, which rewards you with magnificent views into the Upper Grose Gorge and some unusually weather-sculpted pagoda outcrops to explore.

**Meet at the cleared parking area beside the Bells Line of Road (left hand side when heading west) 3.5 kms west of the junction of Mt Wilson Rd and Bells Line of Road at**

**10.00am. If travelling from the Mt Victoria or Lithgow direction the meeting place is 4.0 kms from the junction of the Darling Causeway and Bells Line of Road (immediately past the line of centre concrete dividers on the bend at Flagstaff Hill).**

**Please take extreme care with traffic passing at speed, there have been many accidents at this spot. If travelling from the west it is suggested you continue on for about a kilometre where you will find a relatively safe area to stop and do a U-turn and return to the meeting place.**

**Those wishing to car share from Mt Wilson should meet at St Georges Church for a 9.45am departure**

**Bring brunch / lunch and plenty of water.**

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

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## **OUR JULY WALK**

**FRIDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2019**

**Open Forest and Spectacular Views**

**Radiata Plateau between Katoomba and Medlow Bath**

The Group last visited this area in June 2014 but Ann Mikkelsen and Freda Moxom have checked out a different route for this walk. It is a medium grade walk with some hilly sections, some bushy areas (so long trousers and sleeves would be appropriate), and a couple of minor creek crossings. There are magnificent views into the Megalong Valley and of the cliffs which rim the valley, jutting rock formations and the remnants of the 1960s Pinus radiata plantation.

**Meet at the gate at the end of Pulpit Hill Road at 10.00am.**

If travelling from the east turn left at the Explorers Tree and proceed to the end of Pulpit Hill Road. If travelling from the west turn right into Explorers Road (at the Explorers Tree sign) and right into Pulpit Hill Road.

**Those wishing to car share from Mt Wilson should meet at St Georges Church for an 9.00am departure**

Bring morning tea, lunch and plenty of water.

**FUTURE WALKS** (Tentative schedule)

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> August 2019 – Castle Head on the Narrow Neck Plateau

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

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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.**

**Friday 14<sup>th</sup> June – Meet at corner of Queens Avenue and Wynnes Rocks Rd**

**Friday 12<sup>th</sup> July – Meet at corner of Queens Avenue and Wynnes Rocks Road**

**Mt Wilson contact Alice Simpson 0414 425 511 or 4756 2110**

**Council contact Tracy Abbas 0428 777 141**