
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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WALLS LOOKOUT AND RIGBY HILL

TOPIC

OUR SEPTEMBER WALK

WALLS LOOKOUT, RIGBY
HILL and GROTOS on
PIERCES PASS

Friday 20th September 2019

We had fifteen participants on this walk; it was good to have Bruce and Lorraine Delprado with us once again after a long absence.

Clouds filled the sky this morning following a few days of very welcome rain but it didn't look as though rain was likely today. As we set off, the still moist foliage is glistening; the bush appears more alive and vibrant. There is that beautiful earthy aroma of wet leaf litter and the colours of the sandstone and sandy soil are enhanced by the dampness. It is a delight to walk in the bush in these conditions when the landscape seems to be rejoicing after receiving long-awaited precipitation.

The narrow track leads us downhill through light open woodland past Old Man Banksias (*Banksia serrata*), both Narrow-leaf Drumsticks (*Isopogon anethifolius*) and Broad-leaf Drumsticks (*Isopogon anemonifolius*) and the occasional Broad-leaf Geebung (*Persoonia levis*). At ground level the ubiquitous Curly Sedge or Old Mans Whiskers (*Caustis flexuosa*) forms mounds of convoluted stems decorated with shimmering



Spring in the Bush

water droplets. Illuminating the ground cover are several examples of the Rush Lily or Vanilla Plant (*Sowerbaea juncea*) disporting their dense clusters of lilac/pink six-petalled flowers with prominent yellow stamens atop long slender stems. (This is the flower that caught your interest Michael.)

Across the treetops we can see swirls of mist twisting up out of the valley. Soon the track leads us around a large dark rock outcrop which houses several small wind-worn caves; the eroded walls of which are

ochre and gold.

Then we are in open heath and reach a small knoll about four hundred metres short of the cliff edge; this is Walls Lookout. The lookout takes its name from a Shire President J.T.Wall. Near this knoll a sidetrack leads off to the left, this is a track used by rock climbers; it leads across Wongarra Gully onto a ledge which runs along the cliff face below Wongarra Hill.

Now views of the majestic cliffs on the opposite side of the Upper Grose Gorge begin to open up. The view is embellished by thin wisps of mist spiralling up from the valley beyond Rigby Hill. We pass a nicely constructed small cairn built atop an intricately curved sandstone slab.

We clamber down the side of a rock outcrop through Dwarf She Oaks (*Allocasuarina nana*)

onto a rock shelf and arrive at the edge of an abyss; the northern escarpment of the Upper Grose Gorge. What better place to settle down for morning tea?

From this lofty eyrie we are looking across to the cliff line stretching from Perrys Lookdown, along the Blackheath Walls, past Bennett Lookout, Bald Head, Baltzer Lookout, Hanging Rock, Burromoko Head to Burra Korain Head; a spectacular sight. The cliffs take on a rather special hue in the muted light on a cloudy day such as this.

Looking downstream the edge of Lockley Pylon peeks out from behind Perrys Lookdown and the mist shrouded cliffs of Walford Wall form an impressive background. Closer at hand, to the left, the aforementioned climbers track can be seen perched on the cliff face, while to the right the sheer cliffs below Rigby Hill are an imposing sight.

We spend some time here taking in the grandeur of the view before us, whilst also taking in morning tea and some of Libby's bushwalker cake baked by Helen.

We retrace our steps for a short distance along the path we followed earlier this morning and veer left onto a less distinct footpad. This path contours along the hillside, the moist shrubbery pressing in on both sides. We pass some interesting contorted Hard-leaved Scribbly Gums (*Eucalyptus sclerophylla*), their smooth silvery bark carrying only a few scribbles by the larvae of the Scribbly Gum Moth (*Ogmograptis scribula*), Ogmograptis must have been suffering writers block, as I was on starting this newsletter. Tucked into rock crevices here are a number of the delightful tiny basal tufts of the Narrow-leaf Trigger Plant (*Stylidium lineare*), not in flower at this time but the golf ball-sized tufts are very attractive. Presently this track drops downhill and we arrive at the Pierces Pass Picnic Area.

Here, across the carpark from a large pagoda-like formation is the start of the track to Rigby Hill. This hill was named after Roger Rigby, the son of Alan Rigby. Alan Rigby was a dedicated bushwalker who played a major role in saving the Blue Gum Forest.

We take the track which climbs up the hill to a cleft between two outcrops where steps cut into the rock take us down to a level area. Here Freda spots a Native Cockroach also known as a Botany Bay Cockroach (*Polyzosteria limbata*). These six-legged bugs have prominent feelers and white edges on their front three segments. Unlike the German Cockroaches which are the bane of householders, these are active in the daytime and can be seen basking on vegetation and stones.

We leave the cockroach to get on with its activities and continue along the path which now zigzags up the hill. We pause at a clearing beside the track which affords views across to the domed form of Liversidge Hill, named after a geologist Prof Archibald Liversidge. Timbered for the most part but on the gorge side it has scattered heath interspersed with horizontal layers of exposed rock shelves; at its base, on the gorge side, is a large squat pagoda.

Back on the track it is only a short climb and we are on the summit of Rigby Hill. Here again we have magnificent views into the Upper Grose Gorge; the cloud cover is beginning to break, casting patterns of light and shade across the talus slopes down toward the Blue Gum Forest; the cliffs are illuminated by the emerging sunshine. From here we get a good view across to Hanging Rock; viewed through the zoom lens the distinct 'bow of a battleship' shape of this formation is quite clear. Closer at hand, the view back to the rock platform where we had morning tea reveals it too resembles the side on view of a ship's bow, with an undercut below where we were sitting. With such views on offer we decide this is an ideal place to pause for lunch.

Following lunch, as we are about to leave this splendid vantage point, we spot a small spider wandering amongst the ground cover. It is perhaps twenty millimetres long, with a black body and a red head. Later investigation showed it to be a male Red-headed Mouse Spider. They live in deep burrows with double or single trapdoors. The females, which can be twice the size of the males, are brown to black

all over with a slight tinge of red on their jaws. The females remain in or near their burrows throughout their lives; they are sluggish and not often aggressive, which is just as well for their venom is highly toxic, potentially as dangerous as the Sydney Funnel Web. The males are normally seen wandering in search of females during the day, especially so after rain; apparently that is exactly what this bloke was doing.

Back down at the carpark Bruce, Lorraine and Jenny decide to call it a day and head off up the road to return to the cars. The remaining dozen walkers take the Pierces Pass track and head down towards Pierces Creek. As we make our way, initially through open forest, the track side is adorned with many examples of the Ledum or Sydney Boronia (*Boronia ledifolia*) displaying a profusion of their brilliant pink flowers, four-pointed stars among their narrow shiny green leaves.

Suddenly we enter the margin of the rainforest and there is a decided drop in temperature. As we near the creek that wonderful sound of gurgling, cascading, tumbling water rises up from below and we are soon looking down onto the intermingled fronds of a group of closely clustered Soft Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*). Beside the track there is an elongated boulder draped in lush soft green moss.

We arrive at a rill coming in from the left and divert into this damp mossy little grotto which loops back onto the track; we head back up the hill. Soon there are some steps on the left leading down to Pierces Creek; Ray Nesci is the only one who volunteers to investigate what lies among the tree ferns below. He reports that the creek has the clearest of clear water running.

A little history while we are in this area.

Clarrie Hungerford and Bert Pierce were both returned soldiers from WWI, Bert having run away from home at age fifteen to enlist; separately they both took up land on the Bells Line in the early to mid 1920s. Possibly because of their wartime backgrounds they became mates.

Hungerford and Pierce, around 1929, journeyed down to the Grose and were enthused by the grasslands along the river, especially those at what was to become known as the Blue Gum Forest. In 1930 they started construction of a track, completed in about three months.

Hungerford leased forty acres bordered on the west and south by the Grose at its junction with Govetts Creek

In 1931 a group of bushwalkers, including Alan Rigby, had walked into this forest area via Medlow Bath and Beauchamp Falls; the opposite direction from the Hungerford and Pierce track. As they sat entranced by this area and discussing that these trees had to be preserved Hungerford and Pierce rode up on horseback. In conversation with the group Hungerford told them he had a lease on the land and intended cutting down all the trees on his lease. Alan Rigby and the bushwalkers were horrified by this prospect and so started the battle to save the forest. There were many twists and turns along the way but thankfully the battle was won and the birth of the Conservation Movement came to pass.

Both Clarrie Hungerford and Bert Pierce have features named after them in the area we are walking in today. Hungerford Gully is the gully between Walls Lookout and Rigby Hill and the continuation of the track below Pierces Pass is known as Hungerford Track (though some texts now refer to the whole track as the Pierces Pass Track). Then there is Pierces Creek, Pierces Pass of course, and Pierces Ravine (again some texts refer to this ravine as Hungerfords Ravine). Such is the variability in identification of some features in these mountains.

Soon we are back at the lower carperk and decide to walk up Pierces Pass Road to return to the cars.

So ended a wonderful walk in bush revitalised by the recent most welcome rain, and we in turn are revitalised by our connection with this superb landscape.

John Cardy

Footnote: Further details of the battle to save the Blue Gum Forest and indeed the Grose Wilderness can be found in Andy Macqueen's excellent and very readable book "Back from the Brink – Blue Gum Forest and the Grose Wilderness".

OUR OCTOBER WALK

FRIDAY 18th OCTOBER 2019

Gigantic Granite Tors, Expansive Views, Caves and Crevices

Evans Crown at Tarana

The Group last visited this spectacular site in September 2014. The granite country is a remarkable contrast to the sandstone landscapes we usually walk in. This is a relatively easy walk with a short climb up to the summit followed by exploration of the majestic granite tors. The bonus for the day will be a visit to Jenny Dargan's beautiful property only a short distance away, and visible from various vantage points on this granite-strewn sugar loaf. The garden should be dressed in its splendid Spring garb at this time. Jenny has kindly invited us for afternoon tea.

Meet at 9.30am in the Coles carpark (Bent Street or St Patrick's Primary School end) of the Lithgow Valley Shopping Centre, where we will have a vehicle rationalisation for the approximately 25 kilometre drive to our walk venue, or meet at the Evans Crown Reserve carpark at 10.15am

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

Bring morning tea, lunch and plenty of water. Afternoon tea is at Jenny's place.

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

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 15th November – Little Zigzag, Bushrangers Cave, Reinits Pass at Mt Victoria

Friday 6th December – We are trying something new this year for our December

walk and end of year / Christmas get together. We have reserved the Brunet BBQ Shelter at Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens for the day. So do try and keep **6th December** free.

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 11th October – Meet at Wynne Reserve

Friday 8th November – Meet at Queens Road

Friday 13th December – Meet at Queens Road

Mt Wilson contact Alice Simpson 0414 425 511 or 4756 2110

Council contact Tracy Abbas 0428 777 141