
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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TESSELLATED PAVEMENTS

TOPIC

OUR JUNE WALK

TESSELLATED
PAVEMENTS at MT IRVINE

Friday 16th June 2017

Health Report: Libby continues with her chemo sessions, suffering some uncomfortable side effects but bravely battling on.

Once again Libby demonstrated what a remarkable lady she is. Although dealing with her ongoing treatment and the after effects of a stomach bug which had struck many people on the mountain, she met the group at her front gate. She presented us with a freshly baked bushwalker cake and had worked out a passenger list for the vehicle rationalisation for the drive to Mt Irvine; all this after deciding she was not well enough to attempt joining us for even part of the walk. Thoughtful and selfless indeed.

Fourteen walkers gathered in brisk invigorating conditions under high cloud for this walk. On the previous two walks we had people join up to the group following their first walk; today we had a new member join up before the walk even started. Marg Beal, a friend of member Merren Dargan, signed up before setting foot on the track; welcome Marg. Also welcome back to Meri Easton who hasn't been with us for quite some years.

We bid farewell to Libby, disappointed that she was not accompanying us, as I am sure



Winter in the Bush

was the case for Libby, and set off on the drive to Mt Irvine.

The natural beauty on show today is immediately evident; the exotic trees and shrubs mingled with rainforest in the Merry Garth gardens and the grassy meadow and pocket of rainforest in the Wynstay property opposite are sublime in the subdued morning light. The elegant fronds of the Soft Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) reach out over the verge of the road as we pass the Cathedral of Ferns. The flared moss-encrusted base of a forest giant protrudes from the

roadside embankment. A little further on the towering smooth white trunks of Blue Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*) rise up from bases stockinged with rough dark bark; they support numerous long pendulous ribbons of discarded bark which reach almost down to road level. This is surely one of the prettiest drives in the mountains.

Our little convoy parks just through the gate at the end of Mt Irvine Road. In Libby's absence I once again step in as leader; what a brave (or perhaps foolhardy) group they are, and Allan Cupitt fills my usual position as whip. A short walk takes us down to the Knight Brown Fire Trail where we veer left expecting to see the stone cairn we built at the start of the track back in January 1915; it is nowhere to be seen. Indeed all the smaller cairns we built at various points along the track at that time, as we later discovered, are also gone. I fail to

understand the mentality of those who destroy cairns in the bush; selfishness? arrogance? I don't know. Not to worry, the track is still evident and we set off to follow the ridge toward the Tessellated Pavement.

The Slender Rice Flower (*Pimelea linifolia* ssp *linifolia*) decorates the surrounding bushland; their tiny tubular flowers, tinged with pink, are carried in large heads atop slender stems. Also immediately present is the ubiquitous Mountain Devil or Honey Flower (*Lambertia formosa*) with its showy clusters of seven red tubular flowers with red styles projecting above; flowers are rich in nectar, thus their common name of Honey Flower. Some carry a few spent woody seed capsules; little horned Satanic faces peering out from the pungent foliage, giving rise to their other common name.

Soon we divert to the left onto a rocky outcrop and pause for morning tea. When it is discovered that Libby's bushwalker cake is still warm we break from tradition and enjoy it now rather than at lunch time. Delicious.

From this outcrop we are looking down into the valley which carries Morleys Creek; named for Harold Morley, one of the three pioneer settlers of Mt Irvine and forebear of Helen Naylor. Helen was a participant on the first walk this group undertook in May 1990, coincidentally to the Tessellated Pavements, and is now an armchair walker and life member; Helen still resides at Mt Irvine.

We continue on, the vegetation pressing in on the track which now becomes indistinct in places. The trunks of Hard-leaved Scribbly Gums (*Eucalyptus sclerophylla*), hollowed and penetrated by fire, stand defiantly as rugged living sculptures; their silvery white bark folding over the edges of the blackened scars. Though their seriously narrowed sections of remaining live wood and bark provide but a tenuous connection to the earth, they refuse to succumb.

Here Sunshine Wattles (*Acacia terminalis*) abound, displaying their deep golden flowers above lush dark green foliage. Scattered here and there are a few examples of the Prickly

Moses (*Acacia ulicifolia*), their short needle-like leaves (or more correctly phyllodes) contrasting markedly with the Sunshine Wattle, as do their pale cream flowers. A third wattle, just coming into bud, having widely spaced narrow flat 'leaves', was also present here; possibly the Sweet-scented Wattle (*Acacia suaveolens*).

A tree trunk laying across the track carries several very attractive bracket fungi; singular half-moons of varying bright colours, one plain bright orange, another orange with an outer band of gold and the third having bands of white, mottled green and copper. Also present were clusters of bracket fungi carrying concentric bands of browns and tans fringed with wavy off-white edges. Tiny bright orange stems protrude from the bark, probably the beginnings of more bracket fungi to break down the dead timber - a very appealing sight.

We pass a rugged example of a Smooth-barked Apple (*Angophora costata*) showing signs of having been rent by winds and scarred by fire. A little further on we cross a couple of rock outcrops and drop onto a shaded saddle where moss shrouded boulders line the track and Smooth-barked Apples become more dominant. Many of the smooth barked trunks of these trees carry the scalloped tracks left by the Red Triangle Slug as it grazes on the algae. It is Australia's largest native land slug, usually only seen during or shortly after rain; the distinctive red triangle on its back is its breathing pore.

This saddle leads us to a rock face with wafer thin layers and wind worn cavities; one such cavity once housed the nest of a lyrebird, not a stick is left now. Soon we divert to the right to take in the view across Bowens Creek to Mount Tootie and Little Tootie before making our way over Tessellate Hill (no idea who stole the second 'l' in that map reference) and dropping down to emerge onto the Tessellated Pavement.

While the formation of polygonal tessellations on sandstone platforms is not fully understood the following is one theory.

A feature of the Sydney Basin examples of tessellated sandstone platforms is a relatively thin crust or rind formed by the concentration of secondary silica as a cement and coating on quartz grains. Polygonal cracking seems to be the result of shrinkage of silica gel due to changes in temperature and moisture during or after formation of this crust or perhaps the cracking of such skins is due to fatigue and changing surface tensions after their formation. Subsequent weathering along those crack lines produces the prominent tessellated patterns we see today.

Let us not allow such technicalities to distract from the fascination of the pavement laid out before us. Within the boundary of each polygon the surface of the sandstone is convex, creating an amazing pillow-like pattern. Moss beds and patches of very stunted vegetation punctuate these extensive tessellations; rock pools are dotted here and there, some carrying axe grinding and sharpening grooves; there is an example of Aboriginal rock art in the form of a now faint carving of a female figure. The edges of the platform display smoothly curved wave-like formations and a large tessellated boulder appears as a giant tortoise shell. This pavement is an amazing jewel in this extensive landscape.

We settle down here for lunch, taking in sustenance for the body and absorbing food for the mind in the magnificent one hundred and eighty-degree views on offer. Across Bowens Creek in the east to Mt Tootie and Little Tootie, along the parallel courses of Bowens Creek and the Wollanganbe River to the north and across the Wollangambe to the west; a stunning panorama of the wild country of the Blue Mountains and Wollemi National Parks. What a quiet, peaceful locale this is. Bliss.

Presently we reluctantly leave this nirvana and retrace our steps back to the cars.

Back at Mt Wilson Robert Chesney had invited us to his property, Sage Cottage, for afternoon tea; Robert's daughter Francis had kindly travelled up from Sydney and had the

table laden with goodies and the makings of tea and coffee ready to go; many thanks Francis.

Robert then explained that this would be his last regular walk with the group, not through lack of fitness, and that was evident to anyone who had seen him on recent more difficult walks, but due to a reduced confidence with his balance. Robert lamented the fact that Libby could not be here today and that Mary Reynolds was not available; the two founders of this group twenty seven years ago.

I responded with a few words which are paraphrased as follows.

“Robert first walked with the group in February 1999, that is eighteen and a half years ago. The walk was Popes Glen to Pulpit Rock and return to Govetts Leap Lookout; that walk held other firsts.

Coincidentally, that was the first on which I wrote the newsletter. Mary Reynolds wrote an introduction which I'll quote:

‘The February walk on Friday, 19th February, 1999 is described below by John Cardy who, I forecast, will be a frequent and popular contributor to this newsletter.’

That prediction proved to be correct, as far as the frequency goes, I have now written one hundred and eighty seven reports. Others can pass judgement on their popularity.

The walk was also the genesis for the Mount Wilson Bushcare Group. Gloria Harris, who was involved with the Blackheath Bushcare Group, gave a talk during the walk on bushcare in Popes Glen, explaining what an overwhelming task it appeared to be five years ago and pointing out the amazing progress which had been made in the Glen.

Robert was present on the vast majority of walks over those eighteen and a half years, and it was a real pleasure to have your company Robert. You are truly one of Nature's Gentlemen, and you will be missed on future walks, we do hope you will still be able to be selective, and perhaps come on the occasional walk.

I have delved into my archives and made copies of that newsletter, covering your first walk, and of some photographs taken on that day, which I hope bring back some very pleasant memories.

Thank you Robert for your support and companionship over those eighteen and a half years.”

So ended another blissful day in the bush through landscapes which varied from open woodland, rocky outcrops, crowding heath and the expansive vistas and serene quietness at the pavements. Sublime.

John Cardy

Yes, those inexplicable little happenings continue. There was a rustling of a young wattle beside the track, yet there was no breeze. Was that a reflection of a figure in the rock pool on the pavements? But no, it was gone. Stay tuned, there may be more to come. (JC)

OUR JULY WALK

Friday 21st July 2017

Magnificent Views of the Grose and Govett Gorges with Stunning Cliff Face and Waterfall Scenery

Pulpit Rock to Cripps Lookout, perhaps to Boyds Beach, and return

This is a different approach to this cliff top track; the group last walked it in June 2016 starting with the Popes Glen track at the opposite end; this time we will start and finish at Pulpit Rock. It is a relatively easy walk of approximately 7km with a descent and ascent of about 150 metres. The close up views of the sheer cliffs from the viewing platforms at Pulpit Rock are outstanding.

Meet at Merry Garth for a 9.00am departure if you wish to car share from Mt Wilson, or in Hat Hill Road just off the Great Western Highway in Blackheath at 9.45am. It is a drive of only about 5.5 kms, mostly on sealed road, from here to the track head.

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

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 (after 7pm) or Helen and John Cardy on 9871 3661 or on mobile 0400 444 966.

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 18th August – Fortress Rock Lookout, Fortress Ridge and Fortress Hill at Leura

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.

14th July – Meet in Hay Lane - Sloan Reserve

11th August – Meet in Hay Lane - Sloan Reserve

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 for details