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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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Volume 31 Issue 1 & 2

January & February 2021

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## TESSELLATED PAVEMENTS

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### OUR DECEMBER WALK

**30 TH ANNIVERSARY  
WALK to the TESSELLATED  
PAVEMENTS at MT IRVINE**

**Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

What a year to forget that turned out to be; bushfires, floods, temperature extremes and track closures galore; then Covid-19 raised its ugly head. Forgettable as the year was generally, we managed some memorable walks; a short review follows.

Due to the widespread Blue Mountains National Park closures and previous low attendances in the height of summer, we did not walk in January. In February we explored Boronia and Hourn Points with their spectacular views, and the riddle of the Mystery Holes and Ross Cave near Mount Piddington in Mount Victoria. March took us to the very pleasant cascades of the Waterfall Circuit south of Lawson and Hazelbrook.

The April, May and June walks were cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions.

In July we enjoyed the open woodland and enclosed rainforest environment of Echo Point and the Waterfall Circuit north of Lawson. August saw us battling strong winds and rain squalls on Mt Banks and enjoying clearing skies and fine views at Banks Wall. The historic Berghofer Pass, Henry Lawson Walk



Summer in the Bush

and the Engineers Cascade at Mt Victoria were our destinations for September.

The spectacular Minnehaha Falls in the north and Reids Plateau and the Round Walk in the south of Katoomba were visited on our October walk.

The delightful Madoline Glen, Birdwood Gully and Magdala Creek track in Springwood shaded us from the heat on our November walk. Which, of course, brings us to our **December walk.**

We had intended undertaking this walk in May followed by a celebratory luncheon in the Village Hall to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the formation of this group; Covid-19 put paid to those plans. So, though seven months late, it was too important an event to go unacknowledged; here is the report of that walk and luncheon.

We met at the Village Hall where Helen had prepared a collage of photographs of the first walk held on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1990. Back then there were 17 walkers and two dogs. Today we had 16 walkers and no dogs.

The 2 dogs in the photographic collage belonged to Libby & Keith and Mary & Ellis. Mary and Ellis's dog was a Scottish Terrier named Clark Maxwell, after the Scottish scientist who formulated the theory of electromagnetic radiation in 1865; Libby and Keith's dog, on the other hand, was called Twinkle, possibly after a little star. In those early walking days they lit a fire and boiled

the billy. I wonder if Libby was baking her now famous bushwalker cake way back then.

After a vehicle rationalisation we set off for Mount Irvine along what has to be one of the prettiest stretches of road in the State. Below overarching rainforest trees and through open woodland where glimpses of distant ridges and valleys are to be had; the rhythmic song of cicadas could be heard for most of our journey.

We parked at the end of Mt Irvine Road below a huge eucalypt. On alighting from our vehicle Ray Nesci's keen eye spotted a couple of cicada sticks; sticks which are feathered by dozens of tiny curls of peeled back bark.

After mating, the female cicada lays its eggs by piercing plant stems or branchlets with its ovipositor (egg-laying spike at the tip of its abdomen) and inserting the eggs into the slits it has made. They hatch into small wingless nymphs which drop to the ground and burrow below the surface. They survive on sap from plant roots for up to 7 years. As they grow over this period they shed their skins several times.

When the nymph reaches full size it digs its way to the surface with its front legs, which are adapted for the job. It then goes through the more familiar process of climbing onto a tree trunk, fence post or any convenient vertical surface where it splits its nymph casing and expands its wings. When the wings have hardened it flies off to find a mate, hopefully before it becomes a succulent meal for a bird.

It was a beautiful day for walking, small puffs of pure white cloud floating across a brilliant blue sky; a gentle breeze tempering the rays of the sun. The track follows the ridge between the Wollangambe River and Bowens Creek. The contour of the ridge is much more evident following the fire of last December; many of the larger trees sporting only epicormic shoots while most of the shrubs have been reduced to skeletal shafts reaching skyward. There are always little gems after the devastation of bushfires, hanging from the spindly form of one fire ravaged shrub were a couple of

clusters of a dozen or more seed pods, charred baubles silhouetted against the azure sky.

We paused for morning tea at a spot which afforded panoramic views across the Wollangambe to the far-reaching ridges of the Blue Mountains and Wollemi National Parks. Michael Ihm distributed slices of Libby's Bushwalker Cake, kindly baked by his wife Beth; thank you Beth, delicious!

We were treated to a large display of the Native Lobelia (*Lobelia dentata*), holding aloft racemes of deep blue flowers; this annual herb flowers more prolifically after fire. (Mother Nature has many compensating habits.) Contrasting with the blue of the Lobelias were the bright pink flowers, held high on slender stems, of numerous Grass Leaf Trigger Plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*). Almost hidden in the sparse regenerating ground cover were a few Slender Violets (*Hybanthus monopetalus*), the conspicuous mauve major petal giving the impression the flowers consist only of a single petal, the two side petals being minute; thus the species name.

We crossed a small saddle where a few Smooth-barked Apple or Red Gums (*Angophora costata*) grew and passed the wind eroded cliff face which once housed a Lyrebird's nest. Soon we diverted to the right to the cliff edge which afforded great views across to Mount Tootie and Little Mount Tootie. Near this spot there was a large swath of Flannel Flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*) displaying their green-tipped pure white velvety bracts. Noted on our return journey, close to this swath in full flower, but in a more sheltered zone, was another large group of Flannel Flower plants, not yet flowering but ready to burst into bloom in the not too distant future.

We made our way back onto the track and soon emerged from the bushland onto the open expanse of the Tessellated Pavements. What an astonishing feature this is; the deeply grooved pattern of the tessellations occasionally carrying shallow pools of water displaying axe grinding grooves in their base;

other depressions are filled with velvety moss beds. And of course there is the intriguing engraving of the female figure; this was obviously an area well favoured by the original inhabitants.

We took group photographs replicating those taken by the original group of walkers thirty years ago, and retraced our steps back to the cars. Along the way we noted a couple of small mats of the Mitre Weed (*Mitrasacme polymorpha*) displaying masses of their tiny four-petalled white flowers. Also sighted were several examples of the Rush-leaf Bloodroot (*Haemodorum corymbosum*) carrying their clusters of black flowers atop stalks about half a metre high.

Back at the Village Hall our numbers grew to twenty-three with the addition of armchair walkers and others who could not make it for the walk. A very pleasing, and unexpected addition to the gathering, was Mary Reynolds, who, along with Libby Raines, originated this Group. Mary has not been too well lately and her daughter Jane, who was visiting, was able to bring her across from Katoomba; marvellous that she could be here for this rather special occasion.

To celebrate this thirtieth anniversary, Helen, my better half, provided a tabletop sized photographic collage which covered the full history of the group. She also made a large collage in the shape of the figure thirty, bordered by tiny lights, and decorated the tables with foliage and battery operated candles; very impressive.

I gave a short talk on the history of the group which is paraphrased as follows:

This year, of course, is the 30 th anniversary of the group, what a wonderful endeavour started by Libby and Mary. For any social group to last thirty years is remarkable.

Helen and I joined the group twenty six years ago and it literally changed our lives. We made many life long friends and spent some amazing times in the Mount Wilson community.

Early on, the Bushwalk Newsletter was a single paragraph; gradually it expanded and Mary and Libby shared writing the reports.

In 1998, twenty-two years ago, Helen dobbed me in to Mary, suggesting I could write an 'occasional' report; Helen is a very good delegator. So I wrote my first report, in December 1998, about Happy Valley. Since then I have written two hundred and twenty eight newsletters; I do hope they have not become boring over that time, if they have take it up with the delegator.

Today's walk was the three hundred and seventy ninth by the group, and over that time, due to Libby and Mary's foresight, literally hundreds of people have been introduced to the wonders of these mountains.

Helen and I became completely enamoured with Mount Wilson and twenty years ago I wrote a lyric poem about the village. Helen, the delegator, suggested I read it on this occasion. I agreed to do that but only on the condition that I read it before the sumptuous Pavlovas were served, thus ensuring that no one would walk out during the reading; one must take precautions.

Several members of the group were kind enough to ask that I include the poem in this newsletter, so a transcription follows; I do hope you enjoy it.

John Cardy

#### A SEASONAL PLACE

John Cardy

Take the Bells Line of Road

On a cold frosty day

See the pale winter sunlight

Trickle down on Mt Hay

Swirling mists rise and fall

Playing hide and seek pranks

On the majestic stone walls

Of a brooding Mt Banks

Most travellers are rushing

#### 4

To places out west  
They rush ever onward  
Who knows of their quest  
So leave the bustle behind  
And traverse the five mile  
Through dry open forest  
And in a short while  
  
At the point in your journey  
Where the road zigs and zags  
The sign says Mt Wilson  
Now there's tree ferns which sag  
Under the burden of moisture  
From the rain and the mist  
Then on up the hill  
Where the road takes a twist  
  
Past banks filled with ferns  
And mosses so green  
On the left is a holding  
Which is named after Breen  
To the casual visitor  
You would not be alone  
If you missed the reserve  
Which is named after Sloane  
  
The black ribbon then winds  
Through a forest of ferns  
Leading into a tunnel  
Where the skeletal forms  
Of sleeping giants clothed  
In their simple winter guise  
Are occasionally glimpsed  
As the soft mists arise

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On through this tunnel  
Of trees without leaves  
There stands the lych-gate  
Lichen draped from its eaves  
Beyond this fine portal  
Is a sight heaven sent  
The church of St George  
Built in fibrous cement  
  
And up on the hill  
There are walls crenellated  
Near the old Turkish Bath  
Where steam was generated  
Close to Chimney Cottage  
Just down from this hill  
Spend time to explore  
And find it you will  
  
A well trodden path  
In its sinuous way  
Winds through the rainforest  
Where leaf litter lay  
Leading on to small grottos  
Weeping rocks, a waterfall  
And past many fine trees  
All straight and so tall  
  
Past an old mill  
The road starts to wind  
Take the path on the left  
And soon you will find  
An arboreal titan  
In a ferny cathedral  
Embracing the soil  
Since time immemorial

A tree fern has fallen  
 Refuses to die  
 Bends its body a little  
 To again seek the sky  
 Entranced by this place  
 You're compelled beyond reason  
 To visit again  
 When there's a change in the season

Winter fires subside  
 In their warm cosy hearths  
 Spring's arrival is signalled  
 A floral explosion at Merry Garth  
 Green hillsides and fields  
 Are suddenly transformed  
 By a golden eruption  
 As the rich soil is warmed

All through the village  
 There are cherries found weeping  
 Soft leaves emerge  
 From the buds where they're sleeping  
 The magnolia is blooming  
 On the back lawn at Wynstay  
 On the court at Nooroo  
 Wisteria parasols halt play

Cherry blossoms reach out  
 And gently overhang  
 Giving an Oriental touch  
 At Donna Buang  
 Along every lane  
 Around every bend  
 There are art works created

In the gardens they tend

The colour keeps building  
 To a silent crescendo  
 Many weeks have now passed  
 Spring nears its end – so  
 As the blossom fades  
 And the new foliage hardens  
 Summer approaches  
 And away from the gardens

There's a rocky outcrop  
 Marked by original dwellers  
 And bearing the name  
 Of a partly French fella  
 The Australian bushland  
 Could hardly look finer  
 While off to the left  
 There's a small hint of China

Toward the horizon  
 A rumble is heard  
 Striking fear into animal  
 Reptile and bird  
 As fingers of fire  
 Reach down from the sky  
 Igniting the bushland  
 And fauna will die

When red tongues of flame  
 Leap up from the ridges  
 The fire starts crowning  
 Building fiery bridges  
 And when it is over  
 The silence – the stillness

## 6

Then nature rebuilds  
    For the cycle is endless

Down in the valleys  
    Away from the heat

There are wondrous places  
    Where walls almost meet

In the deep narrow canyons  
    The water is cold

For the sun rarely reaches  
    These mysterious folds

Trees cling to rocks  
    With roots serpentine

In more open spaces  
    There are tall turpentine

The narrower canyons  
    Are cathedrals of green

Illuminated eerily  
    By a piercing sunbeam

To visit these places  
    Truly enriches the soul

Their endless creation  
    Is Mother Nature's role

But care must be taken  
    For these pleasures can cost

Treat these places lightly  
    And lives can be lost

Now in the bushland  
    There's a sight to behold

Waratah and pultenaea  
    Blood red upon gold

The scent of boronia

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Hangs in the air  
Some subtle, some showy  
    Native flowers everywhere

The gentry of Sydney  
    Came here to reside

To escape summer heat  
    Which begins to subside

The leaves of some trees  
    Not native to here

Begin to change colour  
    As autumn draws near

The tunnels of green  
    Change to yellow and gold

The hillsides are dotted  
    With crimsons so bold

The maples of Bebeah  
    More red than the gates

In the Nioka gardens  
    A nyssa radiates

Throughout the village  
    The trees are now glowing

Swirling carpets of colour  
    As the wind begins blowing

Up on Smiths Hill  
    If you look back across

A colourful kaleidoscope  
    Lindfield Park and Gowan Ross

The autumnal sun  
    Sits low in the sky

Casting long shadows  
    Over the vast Wollemi

## 7

From Sylvan Close gardens

This vista is gilt edged

Underscored in scarlet

By a tall maple hedge

The colour then fades

Leaves and temperatures fall

Winter approaches

The four seasons have all

Exerted their forces

At nature's own pace

To enhance the rare beauty

Of this Seasonal Place

MOUNT WILSON

A small aside: Freda kindly presented me with a copy of a very entertaining book by David Bader on Haiku, an unrhymed poetic form of seventeen syllables arranged in three lines of five, seven and five syllables developed by Japanese Zen monks in the sixteenth century. The publication gives one hundred examples of classic books reduced to this form in a very amusing way, for example Frankenstein:

A mad scientist

creates a ghastly Monster

who just wants a hug.

My love of Bonsai may indicate I have some unknown Japanese connection in the deep long lost past, but I am most certainly not a monk by any stretch of the imagination. But I couldn't resist attempting to reduce the 1,380-word account of our thirtieth anniversary walk to seventeen syllables in three lines, here goes:

Thirty years of bushwalks

Commenced at the Tessellated Pavements

Celebrated at the Village Hall

Says it all really, and a tremendous saving in paper, but I can't really see it catching on.

**As noted in the December newsletter there will be no walk in January, as**

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**well as being the height of summer, in that week Helen and I have family commitments**

### **OUR FEBRUARY WALK**

**FRIDAY 19<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2021**

**Spectacular Valley and Waterfall Views**

**Rocket Point Lookout, Undercliff and Overcliff Tracks at Wentworth Falls**

The views from this mainly sheltered track and its many lookouts along the way into the Jamison Valley and beyond are spectacular. The various aspects on offer of the magnificent Wentworth Falls are also very special. Freda has invited us back to her lovely home to partake of our lunches. Meet at the Wentworth Falls Picnic Area at the end of Falls Road in Wentworth Falls at 9.30am. Those wishing to car share from Mt Wilson meet at St George's Church for an 8.30am departure

Bring morning tea, lunch and plenty of water.

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

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### **FUTURE WALKS**

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2021 – Hat Hill to Anvil Rock and the Wind-eroded Cave at Blackheath

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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 8<sup>th</sup> January – Silva Plana**

**Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February – Check calender on the Mt Wilson community website for location**

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

**Council contact Tracy Abbas 0428 777 141**