
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

FEBRUARY, 1999

CANYONING

Monday, 4th January To Joe's Canyon

for this journey in to Joe's Canyon and beyond. As is usual on these trips we were joined by some younger participants, **two of the Pembroke girls, Olivia and Harriet and their friend, Svetlana along with Helen Raphael's, son Todd and his friend Aaron and four friends of Kathleen Howard Smith. Before heading down the Wollangambe track, some rapid testing of spare wet suits took place.**

On reaching the 'HALFWAY ROCKS' we paused while Libby pointed out the route we would be following and the line of the old bridle track once used to gain access to the Wollangambe River by horseback. We then continued towards Joe's Canyon, following a dry creek bed through open country until reaching an area where the creek began to cut more deeply into the rocks.

Taking advantage of a relatively spacious area, we donned our wet suits, noting the remarkable phenomenon that wetsuits always seem to shrink a little each year! Proceeding into Joe's Canyon, Libby stated nonchalantly the 'Joe' was in fact a snake. It would be wise to keep a look out for his relatives. The creek bed was still dry as we entered this beautifully sculptured narrow passage, with its vertical walls displaying the characteristic gently curved patterns which are the remains of swirl pools and channels cut by the relentless passage of water over the ages. One can only gaze in wonder at yet another masterpiece on Mother Nature.

Our Swamp Wallaby

"Joe" was in fact a snake and to watch out for his relatives.

The creek bed here was still dry as we entered this beautifully sculptured narrow passage; the vertical walls displaying the characteristic gently curved patterns, being the remains of swirl pools and channels cut by the relentless passage of water over the ages. One can only gaze in wonder at yet another masterpiece of Mother Nature. Emerging at a small ledge overlooking a welcoming pool, which was the junction with Du Faur Creek, we became serious, inflated our Li-Los and plunged into the refreshingly icy waters.

After a short paddle cross this pool, we entered a longer, narrow channel of deeper water. The walls of this canyon varied considerably from sloping banks covered in lush vegetation allowing in ample sunlight to vertical water-worn cliffs, narrowly spaced creating a darker more secretive atmosphere. In some sections there were stands of coachwoods *Ceratopetalum apetalum*, in full flower. The coachwoods are like our native Christmas Bush; the sepals enlarge when fruiting and become red. We progressed slowly down the creek sometimes

floating, at other times wading, constantly entertained by the sight of large orange yabbies trundling along the floor of the creek and the water boatmen skitting aimlessly across the surface. Incidentally are sand shoes called sand shoes because of the incredible amount of sand which they collect when wading in creeks?

On reaching a sandy bank beside a large pool where the creek cuts under an imposing rock overhang, it was decided we would have morning tea. (As it was now near midday had certain regular walkers who shall remain nameless Tom? been with us there would have been a rebellion long before this.)

What an idyllic setting! Bright cobalt blue dragon flies darting here, hovering momentarily and darting there; the sound of the rippling water running over the bed of smooth pebbles; even a Water Dragon appeared to add a primaeval touch to this ancient landscape. Olivia, Harriet and Svetlana skimmed flat pebbles across the pool--Aren't simple pleasures often the best?

We continued onto the Bell Creek junction where a decided difference in water temperature could be felt between water flowing in Du Faur Creek and that in Bell Creek; the latter being much colder. Leaving our packs and li-los, we walked a short distance up stream in Bell Creek, soon encountering a deep pool requiring a short swim --very bracing--and then a second pool leading under a huge fallen boulder to a small cascade--an even more bracing swim only attempted by the more hardy and/or fully wet suited members. 'A truly picturesque and magical area'. On the return walk to the junction a grass tree was noticed perched precariously on the edge of a high cliff, a full skirt of spent leaves hanging below and contrasting markedly with a large crop of green leaves, an unusual sight silhouetted against the clear blue sky. Another unforgettable was a fallen log covered with hundreds of small cream coloured fungi, growing from the decaying wood.

Continuing towards the Wollamgambe junction a large cathedral like rock overhang is encountered protecting a sandy beach. The range of colours in the stone ceiling was amazing with reflected sunlight producing shimmering patterns for added highlights. At the next pool Svetlana had her first close encounter with a yabby which Alan Heap caught for her. She gingerly held it long enough to be photographed but deposited it unceremoniously back in the water about one 'nano' second later.

The next section requires much scrambling over numerous rock falls but was easily accomplished with plenty of team work plus much appreciated guidance and assistance from Hans. Soon the junction was reached with the Wollamgambe and the trip was concluded with a gentle drift into "The Beach". Her we met Helen Raphael who had accompanied us to the

beginning of Joe's Canyon and then returned to this point.

Reluctantly we deflated the li-los and peeled off the wetsuits like a group of cicadas emerging from their shells. A delightful end to a wonderful day was spent lounging on the beach having a very late lunch while watching the yabbies foraging for theirs near the far bank and glimpsing the occasional flash of brilliant blue as a kingfisher darted along the river.

Now, if only there was an easier way to get back to the Fire Station!

This colourful account of the canyoning expedition was contributed by John Cardy. Many thanks, John.

Letters of Thanks

Here are 2 letters which everyone should have the opportunity of reading.

'Dear Mary and all the Bushwalking Group

Thank you very much for the beautiful vase you gave me as a Get Well, Thinking of you and a Thank you gift and the two lovely cards with so many of your names and goodwill messages. It has been very reassuring to know that you have been thinking of me and the kind messages meant a lot to me as I read them frequently in hospital and was able to think of you all and the many happy times we have spent together, walking and enjoying the wonderful bush and exploring new and beautiful places.

How fortunate we are and let us hope there will be many more lovely days spent in these mountains of ours.

With love and Best Wishes,
Libby.'

'To All of My Bush Walking Friends,

Thank you so much for all your kind thoughts and best wishes which have certainly made this experience a lot easier. The colours in the beautiful arrangement of flowers--pin cushion protea, yellow gerbera and rust coloured chrysanthemum with the beautiful gum leaves reminded me of some of the lovely wild flowers we had seen on our recent walks. I look forward to being back with you soon.

Much Love to All,
Helen (Freeman)

We certainly hope that Helen will return very soon. Libby is back with us and we are very grateful for that.

Our Quiet Achiever, Bill S. is in Lithgow Hospital. We all send our warmest thoughts for a very speedy recovery. You know you are indispensable.

Our January Walk

Friday 15th January 1999

To the Bogey Holes,

Mt Wilson

Twenty six was it twenty seven? gathered at Silva Plana, Mt Wilson on a warm afternoon with the hint of a gentle breeze playing and cooling that warmth. Libby expertly organised a car shuffle down to Ryan's cutting on the Five Mile and then we were off briefly along the road, down the upper part of the Zig Zag. Almost concealed is the entry to the track taking us to the 'Sunday Afternoon Walk'. Libby left a cloth tied to a branch to tell Beth Raines where the track was. It enters into rainforest but it is rain forest much affected by the hand of man sadly. While the path was slippery with moisture from recent rain, too often there was evidence of the Himalayan honeysuckle, an awful menace and a destroyer of the beauty of the forest along the Zig Zag. At the entrance to the track to the right is an area where stone was quarried in the early days of settlement in Mt Wilson. This stone was used probably in the construction of Dennarque in Church Lane. On the top of the ridge we left the rain forest, coming out in to open forest and joining the trail called the Sunday Afternoon Walk. Here was another threat to the bush Agapanthas in flower. Libby said 'Off with their heads!' why? to stop them seeding and spreading. The Sunday Afternoon Walk gained its quaint name as it was a regular path for the earlier inhabitants of Mt Wilson on a Sunday beginning off Du Fours Rocks Rd.

Far below tucked away on the left was the home of Tom Kirk, built with his own hands and reflecting his skill and knowledge of timbers. On we moved surrounded by bush which was totally vibrant with growth and energy. Rains over the last weeks have created a sense of awakening in the bush which showed none of the usual summer signs of heat exhaustion. Yet curiously when we eventually arrived at the watercourse and soaks there was little or no evidence of water! This is a puzzle and a worry.

Meanwhile as we descended the ridge, the different eucalypts caught the eye they all looked so grand and alive!

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