
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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KANANGRA WALLS NATIONAL PARK

Our July Walk

FRIDAY, 17TH JULY 2001

John Cardy describes this walk in his fine descriptive and telling style.

Evocative names such as **Pookan Holes, Thuat Spires, Danae Brook, Big Misty and Kanangra Deep** conjure up images of surreal, fantasy landscapes. The most fertile imagination however could not have matched the spectacular reality laid out before us on this trip to Kanangra Walls.

Five members met at Merry Garth for the start of this journey and eleven more had gathered at Mt Victoria. Our tiny convoy headed west through both Hartley and its little brother. Soon after crossing the Cox's River on the Jenolan Caves Road, Anne Clarke and her son, Peter tagged on to the caravan building the numbers to eighteen. We continued through Lowther and Hampton on this stunningly beautiful day; an absolutely cloudless sky, a gentle zephyr hardly strong enough to rustle the leaves, and the pale winter sun occasionally glinting off patches of frost lingering in dips and hollows. A not so nocturnal wombat was seen trundling along the verge and sadly a short distance further on the body of another, a roadkill victim, lay beside the asphalt, perhaps the reason for the daylight wandering of the first animal.

After passing through the extensive pine forests we negotiated the serpentine plunge into the deep valley which cradles the magnificent Jenolan Caves, crossed that exquisite stone bridge at the Blue Lake and threaded our way through the always impressive Grand Arch. Having made the steep, tortuous climb back out of the valley we soon entered the Kanangra Boyd



Winter in the Bush

KANANGRA BOYD TOPIC

National Park. After traversing twenty six kilometres of mainly good gravel road our destination was reached.

The first section of walking track from the carpark to the main lookout is through bushland which was rehabilitated in 1984; the roadway having originally extended to the edge of the escarpment. Here are examples of the Silver Banksia [*Banksia marginata*] still carrying a few small yellow flower spikes, Conesticks [*Petrophile pulchella*], Blue Mountains Mallee Ash [*Eucalyptus stricta*] and the ubiquitous Mountain Devil

[*Lambertia formosa*]. The thick growth along the path masks the panorama which awaits until the short side track to the lookout is reached. At this point the most glorious vista suddenly unfolds. I have previously used the word awesome to describe views; this one however is **Awesome!!** The group, I feel, was indeed awestruck as they were strangely hushed as we selected vantage points on this rocky outcrop to soak up the spectacle as we had morning tea. Ray Nesci summed it up, saying, "We're having morning tea in front of the best view in the world." None present would have demurred on this sublime day. Incidentally, now that Gloria is happily back on deck, early morning teas will be the order of the day!

Sitting on the edge of this precipice affords a plethora of incredible sights. Light is reflected off rippling water in the Kanangra Deep five hundred metres below us; the peaks of Thuat Spires thrust skyward, their 'conical' shape more in keeping with European mountains than the more rounded profiles usual in this region. Across the ravines the walls glow gold above the steep talus slopes which carry numerous scars resulting from landslides. A lone wedgetail eagle rides the air currents far below us, while in the distance the Narrow Neck

Ridge Mt Solitary and the main Blue Mountains Ridge are plainly visible.

Following morning tea Hans and I were engrossed in studying a map while the rest of the group moved off. We hurried down the Waterfall Track to catch up. Unfortunately the group had headed towards the Dance Floor Cave in the opposite direction ! On reaching Kalang Falls and finding we were the only ones there, it immediately became obvious what had happened and we made haste to retrace our path to rejoin the group. No harm done on this occasion. The only consequence being that Hans and I saw some interesting scenery the rest of the group did not. However it did highlight how easy it is to become separated in the bush.

The Dance Floor Cave is a magnificent overhang so named because a timber dance floor was constructed here in 1891 and it was frequented by families from as far away as Picton, Camden, Burragorang and from the Oberon district. The container which catches the pure, clean water dripping from the roof was first placed by bushwalkers in 1940.

A short climb takes us onto the plateau of Kanangra Tops. In this area which is exposed to strong winds, the heath is much more stunted and trunks and branches have been sculptured into fantastic sinuous shapes by the elements. There are many examples of jins and sharis. Bonsai terms for branches and trunks which have been stripped of bark and bleached. A short distance on we diverge to the left to take in the stunning view of the huge rock overhang ; the site incidentally of the final dramatic scene in the 1955 film "Jedda". It was Charles Chauvel's last feature film and the first to star Aboriginal actors in leading roles and the first to be filmed in colour by an Australian company. Set and shot in Central Australia the final scene was apparently spoiled. It was re-shot here rather than making the long expensive trip back to the Centre. [Just a little " Bill Collins" interlude there.]

We continued along the narrow path which meandered through this low expansive wind-clipped heath. The vegetation here includes the Dwarf She-Oak [*Allocasuarina nana*], the Heath Banksia [*Banksia ericifolia*], the Silver Banksia [*Banksia marginata*] and the Coral Heath [*Epacris microphylla*]. Mostly the different species blend together to form an undulating almost impenetrable hedge-like structure. However here and there broad-leafed Drumsticks [*Isopogon anemonifolius*] extend their erect structural form above the heath profile as if in defiance of the elements. Occasionally the heath parts to expose bare platforms, some of which feature intriguing little pools and sculptured low lying rock formations. In a few such areas there were striking miniature windswept forests floating on islands of lush green moss.

Moving on we came closer to the cliff edge again to enjoy the view back towards Kanangra Falls before

proceeding over a low ridge where the heath was now above head height giving the impression of walking along a narrow alley. We dropped down to a large open rock shelf which was our lunch venue, a more spectacular alfresco dining spot would be impossible to find. As we sated our appetites we took in the enormity of the panorama which surrounded this vantage point. On a day such as this and in such a location it is difficult to avoid using cliches, so I won't even try. We felt as if we were on the brink of eternity, sitting on top of the world where we could see forever on this picture perfect day ! Some with better long vision than myself could just make out the buildings of the Sydney CBD and with the aid of binoculars the Harbour Bridge and surrounding buildings, one hundred and ten kilometres away were clearly visible. Closer to hand was the majesty of Mt Cloudmaker, Mt Stormbreaker and Crafts Walls.

Reluctantly we retraced our outward path to return to the carpark, being treated along the way by the afternoon sun highlighting the massive form of Mt Colong and intensifying the golden glow of the Kanangra Walls. Following the customary cuppa, we began the long journey home considering it but a minor inconvenience after enjoying the spectacle we had experienced today. The show however was not yet over. Back in the Lowther area we were treated to the wonderful display of the setting sun illuminating the Kanimbla Valley and the distant escarpment; truly the icing on the cake !

Our August Walk

TO LEURA CASCADES AND THE LEURA FOREST

FRIDAY, 17TH AUGUST 2001

Our last visit to this attractive walk was in November 1997. **A warning that there are many steps and the track will be slippery as it descends into the valley. So care must be taken!**

Nevertheless it is well worthwhile as it traverses beautiful rainforest and scenery as it descends to the Leura Forest. We will return either via the Furber steps or the Scenic Railway at Katoomba. The sketch map on page 4 will give you a clear picture.

MEET AT THE PICNIC AREA ON THE CLIFF DRIVE NEAR THE TRACK TO KATOOMBA FALLS AT 9. 30 A.M. [We met there for the walk in February 2001.] There will have to be some organisation of cars to take us to the starting point for the walk at the Leura Cascades.

MEET AT MERRY GARTH AT 8. 30 A.M.

3

Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.

FURTHER WALKS

Friday, 21st September 2001. To Mt Hay.

Friday, 26th October 2001. The Sunday Afternoon Walk and Du Fours Rocks Mt Wilson. [Note that this is the 4th Friday.]

Friday, 16th November 2001. To the Ikara Ridge ---a new walk for the Group.

Friday, 14th December 2001. [2nd Friday].

Possibly at Mt Tomah.

BUSH CARE

As always the Mount Wilson/Mount Irvine Bushcare group meets on the second Friday of each month. It is very encouraging that there has been an increase in the membership over recent months. The dates and the venues for the next 3 months are:

Friday, 7th September 2001 Meet in Sloan Reserve Mt Wilson at 9.00 a.m.

Friday, 12th October 2001 Meet in Sloan Reserve at 9.00 a.m.

Friday, 9th November 2001 Meet opposite 'Kookootonga' Mt Irvine Rd. Mt Irvine at 9.00 a.m.

Contact Liz Raines for further information Tel. (02) 4756 2121.

MEMBERSHIP DONATIONS OR RENEWALS

Another gentle reminder to some who appear to have forgotten about this year's donation. \$8.00 per person. Check with Alison if you are not sure what your present status is. Tel. (02) 4756 2055

MEMBERS' NEWS

Gloria Harris has reported that Heather Tabrett is now home from hospital and is much improved. That is good news. Our best wishes to Heather for continuous improvement and a return to good health.

A REMINDER ABOUT THE FOLLOWING :

Celebrating World Heritage with People of the Greater Blue Mountains Area.

A WILDERNESS WALK AND LOCAL COMMUNITY CAMPFIRES

Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

SEPTEMBER 1ST TO 22ND 2001-----The Gumtree Songline Walk and the Gumnut campfires.

The walk is a three week long relay through the heart of the World Heritage Area by experienced bushwalkers. Along the way each party will be asked to observe and record the gumtree species. The walk will culminate in a major overnight celebration in the Blue Gum Forest where conservation commenced 70 years ago when the Blue Gum Forest was saved from destruction.

The Gumnut Campfires

Each section of the walk will commence with a Gumnut Campfire held at the National Park Heritage Area boundary. This will provide an opportunity for the local communities, especially schools and less able people to interact with the Wilderness walkers through a welcome and farewell and a sharing of experiences through stories, music and images. It is possible there could be A Gumnut Campfire in the Mt Wilson--Mt Tomah area.

Wyn Jones , a former National Parks and Wildlife Senior Officer is the leader. He can be contacted at P.O. Box 60 Blackheath 2785.

FOR OUR AUGUST WALK CONTACT

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