
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

Volume 12 Issue 1

January 2002

RED HILL FIRE TRAIL

Our December Walk

FRIDAY, 14TH DECEMBER
2001.

Welcome to 2002. Sometimes when I write this date or this year I feel a strange sense of unreality as though it belongs else where and not with me or those of my generation.

Our dear friend, Hans belongs to that generation and has experienced much of the terrible traumas of the 20th century, especially during World War 2 as a young German lad caught in the devastation of Germany at the end of that war.

Hans found his way to Australia and how fortunate for us that he did. For since the foundation of this Walking Group in 1990 he has played a remarkable role in it. He has shown us, along with Libby, many different paths in our bushland. When he came to this country he became devoted to its bushland and its flora and fauna. Indeed his knowledge of these subjects shames many of us born in this country. On every walk and there are few that he has missed, he has contributed much to many of us quietly and unobtrusively explaining and discussing the wonder of the plants and the environment. He was a guide and mentor on innumerable occasions, offering ideas and passionate, too on many wider issues. We, as his friends, extend to him now as he deals with illness, and is unable to join us on our monthly walk all our affection and friendship and constantly extend our gratitude to him for being so devoted, knowledgeable and so important and



Summer in the Bush

MT WILSON ROAD

good to us. Having Robyn with him and his family must give him comfort, strength and determination.

Hans and Robyn were with us on Friday, 14th December 2001, a very special day indeed! Here John Cardy describes that afternoon walk when we took the Red Hill Fire Trail for the first time.

There was standing room only at the small parking area beside the Five Mile [Mt Wilson Road], the starting point for this afternoon walk. Thirty and a half had assembled, thirty to walk and one [Anna's delightful little

girl, Courtney] to enjoy the ride carried papoose style by Anna.

This was to be a walk of opposites, of Yin and Yang, soft and harsh, smooth and rough. Here we immediately had our youngest ever participant and possibly our oldest in Ern at 87 years.

I positioned myself on an elevated vantage point to count the hordes as they negotiated the locked gate in unbelievably varied and imaginative styles and then headed off along the fire trail. Initially the trail follows a ridge and in this relatively dry open environment we encounter the blue *Damperia stricta* with its delicate crinkled flowers. Soon we are among the Scribbly Gums, *Eucalyptus sclerophylla* their trunks and branches distorted by the elements into sculptures of grotesque beauty, some bearing the scars of long extinguished fires forming mysterious hollows, cavities and apertures. Here also are the robust forms of broad-leaved Drumsticks, *Isopogon anemonifolius* carrying a few large flamboyant yellow flowers and rounded cones. In stark contrast nearby are examples of the slender Violet, *Hybanthus monopetalus* its exquisite

mauve flower with its dominant lower petal a joy to the eye.

Soon we walk below a 132,000 volt transmission line slicing its way through the bush [the Yang]. However the clearing for its easement opens up extensive views towards Mt Charles [the Yin]. The ground hugging *Grevillea laurifolia* was busily covering the earth in this area, while beside the track there was an example of that uncommon root parasite, *Atkinsonia ligustrina*. Dotted here and there beside the trail were isolated examples of the Flannel Flower, *Actinotus helianth*, their soft velvety flowers a foil to the rigid tubular red flowers of the Mountain Devil, *Lambertia formosa* --Yin and Yang !

The trail soon becomes steeper and rougher as it descends suddenly to a lower level of the ridge. Because of the track conditions Ern decided to return to the car park and was accompanied by Mary, Bruce, Hans and Robyn [mental note -- that's 25 and a half left]. Then one of Anna's guests felt a little ill so Anna and papoose, Courtney and the two guests, Anne and Victoria turned back [mental note -- that's 22 left]. To deliver car keys and some other reason which escapes me, Kevin went back/ came back/ went back/ came back--[mental note --that's 21/ 22/ 21/ 22/ left] and finally Mary, Bruce, Hans and Robyn returned [mental note that's 26 left]. These activities really put the brain into overdrive; if this keeps up I'll have to carry a laptop computer in the backpack !

While all this "tooning" and "froing" was going on, the rest of the group followed a short side trail to a vantage point which gave a view of Bowens Creek in the area where it is joined by Range Creek. Continuing along the main trail, we saw examples of the Old Man Banksia, *Banksia serrata*, the Hairpin Banksia, *Banksia spinulosa* and the Needle Bush, *Hakea sericea* with its spidery white flowers 'dustered' along its stems. Again these rigid, sculptured growth forms are contrasted by the flowing soft curves of the Old Man Whiskers *Caustis flexuosa* growing nearby. Through the trees to the north glimpses of Wynnes Rocks can be seen, looming like a brooding Gothic castle standing guard over the north arm of Bowens Creek. A curve to the right and the trail begins to descend once again; here a magnificent example of the Grass- leaf Trigger Plant, *Stylidium graminifolium* grows beside the trail, a single stem heavily furnished with bright pink flowers.

Once again we approached the transmission line we had earlier encountered and arrived at the end of the trail which had delivered us to a vantage point approximately 120 metres above Bowens Creek. Here we settled down for afternoon tea and as there was no large clearing we were scattered through the bushland, some opting for shaded nooks among the trees, others choosing sun drenched rock ledges near the edge to take in the views. Helen and I chose the latter and sat with Hans and Robyn admiring the wonderful cliffs opposite. Hans related being here some time ago with Robyn very late

in the afternoon and both could not believe their ears when, at that late time of day, sounds of voices drifted across the valley. It turned out to be a couple of Yowies having a domestic ! Rather it was abseilers on those cliffs. A quite distinct track could be seen leading towards these cliffs from the end of a fire trail which runs off Bells Line of Road at Range Hill. Thus it appears that this is a much used abseiling venue.

The view east afforded a vista which included Haystack Ridge, Mt Tomah and Mt Bell. The general dark green/ grey of the landscape was highlighted occasionally with the light green patches of hanging swamps, no doubt somewhat depleted of their stored moisture after this extended dry period. An intermittent glint of the sun was seen reflecting off vehicles travelling the Bells Line as it snaked its way [mostly hidden from our view] through the landscape, a reminder that this idyllic spot was not too far removed from harsh reality---more Yin and Yang !

After polishing off a piece of Libby's always welcome Bushwalkers Cake, we reluctantly rose from our chosen pews and retraced our path to the car park, noting on the way many examples of the Broad- leaf Geebung, *Persoonia levis* their soft copper- coloured new growth glowing in the afternoon light. So ended another wonderful year of bushwalks. However this day was not nearly finished. We headed to the delightful gardens of "Merry Garth", where with many thanks to Keith and Libby for their hospitality and to Beth for her assistance with preparations, we once again gathered for our Christmas barbecue. [Over 40 were present .]

Feeling rather despondent on this occasion due to events unfolding which force one to take stock of one's very existence, I took time to seek out a quiet corner of this enchanting garden to spend a short time of reflection and while, so doing, observed the people present at this gathering. Although what I am about to express puts me at risk of sounding like part of a mutual admiration society, I feel at times these thoughts should be articulated , not least at a time such as this.

My feeling of despondency quickly turned to a feeling of immense pride to be associated with this group of people. People who live life to the fullest, people who put back into the community at least as much as they take out , people who deal with various trials and tribulations with little complaint, people who have the strength of character to face with dignity anything life throws up , even the ultimate challenge.

Whatever the future holds we can all celebrate the companionship and camaraderie, friendship and cooperation, mutual respect and guidance so freely given by members of this group over the years, experiences which will remain with us for all time.

I am sure that every person who has belonged to our Group and those currently belonging will appreciate and

fully applaud John Cardy's moving tribute. We thank him very much for it.

Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

DO NOT FORGET FOR OUR JANUARY WALK
CONTACT:

Libby Raines (02) 4756 2121 or Mary Reynolds

(02) 4756 2006 or Alison Heap (02) 4756 2055

Our January Walk

Normally this would take place on **FRIDAY, 18TH JANUARY 2002.**

Libby has asked me to say that with the present situation with bush fires occurring in many places, she is uncertain at this stage if the walk can be held or where we will walk. You are requested to ring her before 18th January, 2002 to find out:

1) if the walk is on and 2) where it will be.

If the walk takes place it will be in or around Mt Wilson and will be an afternoon walk. Bring afternoon tea. Again if the walk is held you will be welcome to take a picnic tea to "Merry Garth" after the walk. Not a Barbecue. This is most kind of Libby and Keith and Beth.

The last weeks have been very stressful for so many people. Some have suffered terrible losses. But South eastern Australia is a fire area and for those of us who love our bushland and live by its side this should never be forgotten. We must try always to understand and do all that we can to combat the danger of fire. All credit to those over these past weeks who have spent days and days protecting homes and people. The efforts of our local fire fighters are much appreciated.

BUSH CARE

This good work continues every second Friday of each month, including 11th January from 9.0a.m. to noon at Sloan Reserve.

Then Friday, 8th February 2002 opposite the Scriveners home 'Kookootonga' at Mt Irvine 9.0a.m.

Friday, 8th March 2002 at the corner of Galwey Lane and Davies Lane at 9.00a.m.

Friday, 12th April 2002 at Sloan Reserve at 9.00a.m.

We look forward to seeing you there.

For further information contact Liz Raines on 4756 2121.

THE WALK PROGRAM FOR 2002 HAS YET TO BE FINALISED. IF YOU HAVE A SPECIAL WALK IN MIND DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT LIBBY, MARY OR ALISON TO HAVE IT CONSIDERED.