

The Evans Crown walk will be described by John Cardy as John can only achieve with verve and style.

Evans Crown Reserve – Tarana

Friday 21st June 2002

On the first of December 1813 near the Fish River the Assistant Surveyor noted a remarkable hill having a stone peak. Being a shy modest type possibly with regal aspirations George William Evans named it Evans Crown after his good self. It was this area we were to explore today and following a vehicle rationalisation at Mt Victoria fifteen walkers set off toward Tarana. The journey took us down the always spectacular Pass of Victoria, west to Old Bowenfels where we turned off the highway and travelled through beautiful undulating farming country via Sodwalls and Sandy Hollow until a short diversion along a gravel road delivered us to the carpark for Evans Crown Reserve.

As we entered the reserve there was no hint of the dramatic landscape we were about to experience. The track initially climbs through well grassed open woodland much appreciated by the local bird population as evidenced by the very pleasant symphony of calls with which we were greeted. After an initial fairly steep climb the track turns sharply left and begins to follow the contour of the hill at a much gentler slope. The dark soil path now takes on a pink hue as the content of decomposed granite increases. We soon encounter some superb examples of the Blackthorn (*Bursaria spinosa*). My only recollection of Blackthorns is as a rather straggly nondescript shrub however these, as well as many we would see during the day, were quite attractive small trees. They had sculptured trunks encased near their base with a coarse corky bark and carried an abundance of tiny heart shaped seed capsules at the extremities of their branches. Vistas now open up of the farmlands below, surprising how high we have climbed so quickly! Trees we have passed at this point include the Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*), the Apple Box (*E. bridgesiana*) including some very young trees displaying their glaucous heart shaped juvenile leaves and the Green Wattle (*Acacia decurrens*) just about to burst into bloom.

Occasional boulders now begin to appear beside the path. Large expanses of exposed granite on the high side of the path carry exquisite moss gardens, some forming lush green islands floating on a pink sea, others elongating along surface crevices in the rock slabs creating velvety little brooks tumbling down the hillside. We pass a large vertical rock face supporting an imposing overhang, turn to climb a final steep pinch and there before us is the first of many granite monoliths we were to encounter today. Our course levels off somewhat here and we continue past numerous granite tors below Ribbon or Manna Gums (*E. viminalis*) decorated with their characteristic ribbons of discarded bark, one old timer taking advantage of a huge boulder by leaning heavily against it for support. (I am referring to a Ribbon Gum here, not one of our walkers.) The Chinese Shrub (*Cassinia arcuata*) is also present here. It releases a curry like aroma when its leaves are crushed and is so named because of its use as a thatching material by Chinese

miners during the gold rush period. We make our way to the base of a granite colossus which provides a sun-drenched area protected from the chilly wind in which to enjoy morning tea.

Following some preliminary scouting by Libby we continued on to a vantage point atop an exposed granite monolith. The views over the nearby farmlands and to the ridges beyond are breathtaking however the beauty of the immediate environment is not to be ignored. The rock surfaces have been utilised by Mother Nature as a canvas on which to create charming works of art using the medium of lichens and mosses. The effect against the pink granite is magical. Her sculptural talents have also come to the fore with the whimsical shapes she has imparted on the majestic tors which are piled almost haphazardly and apparently precariously around us. Contrasting with these expansive effects are a chain of tiny perfectly hemispherical indentations strung along a shallow depression in the rock surface. Adjacent to this area in which we lingered for some time in order to soak up the grandeur was a small grove of Black Cypress Pine (*Callitris endlicheri*) sheltering in the lee of a large rock face.

We were loath to leave this vantage point however other jewels in the crown beckoned. We made our way through a mini forest of Common Bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*) to an area which afforded views toward Tarana and beyond. Incidentally the pink granite used in the construction of the Sydney Opera House was quarried at Tarana. Near this vantage point was a magnificent example of the Narrow-leaf Geebung (*Persoonia linearis*) about 3 metres tall, its stout trunk and wonderfully contorted branches clothed in dark, rough flaky bark were highlighted by the smooth granite rock face against which it stood.

Perhaps it was the rarefied air at this altitude of 1100 metres or just a general intoxication from such a glorious day, whatever the cause some strange behavioural patterns began to emerge among the group. Marjorie had no trouble during morning tea in convincing people to begin hugging trees in order to listen to the strange gurgling noises which could be easily heard if ones ear was pressed against the trunk. People now began seeing all manner of strange objects in the various granite tors. Elephants got a mention, as did thatched huts, also penguins and dinosaurs. In fact one huge boulder was seen by some to represent a penguin and by others a dinosaur. What vivid imaginations, the similarities between a penguin and a dinosaur are obvious aren't they?! It wouldn't have surprised if a group of schoolgirls dressed in white smocks was seen disappearing between the rock monoliths!

As we moved below the head of a giant dinosaur (or was it the beak of a penguin?) we chanced upon a spectacular specimen of *Eriostemon trachyphylla*, probably 2 metres tall with a spread of perhaps 3 metres. The stems of this shrub are covered with raised oil glands giving a bubbly appearance. This is considered to have a scattered and uncommon distribution in the region, Evans Crown being an area noted for its occurrence. This and many other lesser examples we came across indicate it is more than happy in this environment.

We continue exploring this wondrous area, experiencing the various vantage points where extensive vistas were enclosed by granite frames, huge fantastically shaped boulders appeared perilously balanced atop even larger granite tors and scattered here and there miniature crystal clear pools surrounded by verdant mosses. At this higher altitude there were examples of Snow Gum or White Sally (*E. paveiflora*) and of Black Sally (*E. stellulata*). As we made our way to yet another rocky outcrop for lunch we passed a moss covered overhang which contained little conical clusters of moss hanging from the underside, a phenomenon this writer has never seen before. Also present in this area is the Mountain Gum (*E. dalrympleana*) displaying its smooth white bark.

Time for lunch and we settled down on an exposed, sun-drenched granite platform, protected from the wind and with magnificent views of adjacent rock outcrops and the valley below. I've said this before but we really do dine in some of the most exclusive places. Having partaken of lunch, topped off with Libby's most welcome and delicious Bushwalkers Cake we tarried here to relax and soak up the atmosphere. I adopted my lizard persona and stretched out on the warm rock to soak up some solar energy.

It was with some reluctance that we left this spot and retraced our path to the carpark. The end of another wonderful bushwalk in a unique and stunning area. George William Evans certainly got the name right; this is indeed an area encrusted with the most exquisite jewels.

PS: I would like to thank Mary for her assistance in researching correct plant names for this article. It proved to be very time saving and was much appreciated by yours truly. I would also like to take this opportunity to formally acknowledge the time and effort Mary puts into the preparation and publication of each and every newsletter, an effort which I'm sure is much appreciated by all our readers.

Reading and typing John's description of this walk were a pleasure. The detail he recalls is graphic, astounding and always with that touch of whimsical humour. Thank you very much John for those kind words. M.R.