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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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LAWSONS LONG  
ROAD MT YORK

## Our May Walk

FRIDAY, 17TH MAY 2002

*'Having breakfasted on meagre rations after sleeping in a rough bush camp, clad only in the most rudimentary clothes, the group gathered near the beginning of Lawsons Long Alley. On a signal from the leader the group began the walk down through the open bushland. The sound of the chilling wind in the tree tops and the early morning chorus of native birds was now interrupted by the harsh metallic clinking of leg irons as the group approached the work site. One hundred and eighty years ago this group began chipping away the solid sandstone rock faces to form the path to be followed "today".'*

After rising from our comfortable beds, partaken of a hearty breakfast, rugged up in warm clothes against the fresh breeze, twelve walkers gathered in the shadow of the remarkable efforts of those "unsung convicts" of so long ago. The endeavours of the free explorers, surveyors and commandants are quite phenomenal and well documented. The achievements of the men in the work gangs, there in the main because of paltry misdemeanours, are unbelievable and regrettably virtually unacknowledged.

We set off through the open forest and soon encountered the first signs of road construction. The rock surfaces display 180 year old pick marks where the high side has been excavated to form a level carriageway. There are a couple of lovely examples of *Banksia spinulosa* here, their flowers carrying row upon row of neatly stacked "hairpins". As we descend this steep section we pass a small native currant bush,



Winter in the Bush

ALLEY, LOCKYERS  
TOPIC

*Leptomeria acida*, carrying numerous green fruit. The drains cut into the solid stone are more prominent now and neatly cut culverts to take water under the road begin to appear. A vertical row of mortices, perhaps to house the nails of a fence and gate are noted in the rock face. Low retaining walls are now becoming evident on the opposite side of the formation. There are well placed and informative plaques in this area and indeed along most of the historic roads we were to traverse today.

Exposed cliff faces high above us glow in the morning sun and the tree coverage becomes more dense as we

continue. Silently following us was a lone Currawong high in the canopy, perhaps a potential meal was his motivation. The road swings slightly left then a sharper turn to the right. It is on the outside of this curve the first major sandstone block retaining wall is encountered. The high quality of the workmanship is laudable. However the sheer hard work in placing the huge blocks under the conditions which would have prevailed at the time is hard to imagine. The road descends more quickly now and another fine example of stonework is seen on the next sharp bend to the left. Here the neatly placed stone has been enhanced over the years by Mother Nature shrouding it in a velvety blanket of moss and lichens.

The road approaches a tiny creek and we are treated to the magnificent vista of a group of Blue Mountain Ash [*Eucalyptus oreades*], their smooth off white trunks highlighted against a background of bright green ferns covering the hillside beyond. The country becomes more open now and evidence of small farms and grazing land is noted. We have descended approximately 170 metres at this point. To the right now is open marshy country which is drained by Kerosene Creek, so named one presumes because of the nearby deposit of shale

which was mined and processed to produce kerosene c. 1866. This creek proved to be the downfall of this road due to periodic flooding. Presently we reach a sundrenched grassy clearing and decide it is the perfect place to have morning tea. Incidentally when the shale works were at their height of production, it is said the glow when ashes were being taken from the huge heaps was so intense that it used to fool the local roosters into crowing in the middle of the night. { If it happened these days the roosters could probably sue someone for the trauma suffered. } !

The rest of the walk to Hartley Vale follows the gravel road which is now used for access to the properties in this lovely valley. This type of walking environment offers the pleasant opportunity to walk in small groups and to converse more easily. This gives the chance to catch up on what others have been doing, plans for the future, etc. The smooth level surface provides the opportunity to occasionally walk backwards and look from whence we have come which gives an entirely different perspective. Off to the right [ when you are not walking backwards ] there are some magnificent rock outcrops and pagodas on the skyline towards the Darling Causeway. Shortly after passing the area where the extensive shale works were once situated, we turned onto a sealed road which took us into the quaint little settlement of Hartley Vale.

This is a delightful village with many original buildings still occupied. The Comet Inn which was built c. 1879 dominates the streetscape. However the whole scene is overshadowed by the grandeur of the surrounding mountains and cliff lines.

A short stroll along the road brought us to Lockyers Track Head, with a pleasant picnic/ camping area. Here the seed heads of Kangaroo Grass { *Themeda australis* } sway in the breeze in this delightfully wooded area. At this point we have descended 210 metres since we started but wait we now have to climb back ! Several members of the group took advantage of the facilities to lighten the load and we began the ascent up Lockyers Road.

Initially this road climbs fairly steeply but then follows the contours around the side of the hill. Several examples of the narrow-leafed Geebung { *Persoonia linearis* } are noted in this area, carrying many yellow tubular flower buds near the end of their branches. Also very prominent here is the Native Holly or Prickly Shaggy pea { *Pondolobium ilicifolium* } with its attractive glossy green but sharp pointed leaves. Soon we came upon a very impressive retaining wall, probably 50 metres long and four to five metres high at its tallest point. Beautifully built with large sandstone blocks it remains a monument to the work gangs. A section which has collapsed due, no doubt, to lack of maintenance gives an opportunity to see the construction details such as longer stones extending back in to the embankment.

Even though this wall was built with forced labour the completion of this section must have given the workers a sense of pride and achievement. Imagine the feeling when they were told : “ Right lads- a change of plan ! We’re not going any further with this one. The boss says there’s a better route over at Mt Victoria !” or words to that effect !! For it was here that Major Lockyer’s dream ended. Surveyor General Thomas Mitchell pulled rank and transferred the work gangs to his dream project, the road down Victoria Pass. This dream came to fruition with the Victoria Pass which with the exception of the years from 1912 to 1920 has been in continuous use since 1832. It is one of the oldest and most significant engineered works in Australia still in use today.

Our route now reverts to a narrow walking track and a set of steep stairs leads into a lovely small area between some huge boulders. The track passes under the trunk of a tree fallen long ago which forms a bridge from one world to another. One end of the trunk rests on a boulder which is dry, sundrenched and devoid of any vegetation while the other sits on a second boulder which is moist and dripping with orchids, mosses and miniature ferns forming a tenuous link between two starkly contrasting environments. We continue on a more gentle though steady climb through Brown Barrels { *Eucalyptus fastigata* } beneath which there are many examples of the Sunshine Wattle { *Acacia terminalis* } which carry hundreds of flower buds waiting for the trigger to set off a golden explosion. Near the end of this walk there were a couple of these plants which could not contain themselves and whose buds had released their golden filaments. In a shallow gully the group rested momentarily among a cluster of Spiny-headed Mat -rush { *Lomandra longifolia* } which is a common tufted plant with strap like leaves 40-80 c.m. long.

In this area which so many convicts had influenced, Libby probably sensing the seeds of a rebellion, led the group onto a rocky outcrop to settle down for lunch!

This vantage point gave extensive views into the valley below and across to Mt York. In the distance a road could be seen winding its tortuous way between hills and along gullies, providing that marvellous sense of intrigue and adventure-- what’s around the next bend?-- what’s over the next hill ? Some of the group sat in the open to enjoy this view while others sought out nooks and crannies to shelter from the quite fresh breeze. We lunched on this little parapet with the grand view before us and two huge Old Man Banksias { *Banksia serrata* } forming a backdrop. Along the remaining section of the track the velvety blossoms of a lone Flannel Flower { *Actinotus helianth* } were sighted and some distance on there was a singular Trigger Plant { *Stylidium graminifolium* } in full bloom. Obviously neither plant has any idea when Spring and Summer occur. We paused at another rock outcrop which afforded a

panoramic view across to the Darling Causeway, into the Kerosene Creek gully and toward the River Lett and beyond. Soon we could hear the occasional car on the Mt York Road and we veered left to follow the 132 kV transmission line easement back to our starting point.

As is usual we had an afternoon cuppa. Helen Cardy produced a Bon Voyage cake for Anne Clarke, who with Don is off to Europe in June. The cake was artistically decorated with the form of a jet liner fashioned from a few sticks. The effect was so realistic that Helen must surely have been an aeronautical engineer in some previous life !

This was a wonderful walk, quite different in many ways from our "usual" if there is any such thing. In addition to the beauty of the Australian bush this walk left us with a sense of wonderment at the tenacity of the explorers and surveyors who found the routes and of the extreme hardships endured by the work gangs who built the roads.

**A special thank you to John Cardy for that detailed description of this walk and its special historical flavour.**

## Our June Walk

**To Evans Crown and the Reserve at Tarana. About a 40 Km drive from Mt Victoria.**

### FRIDAY 21ST JUNE 2002

This walk was first undertaken in July 1998. This will be our second visit to the area. However as our membership of active walkers is changing it could well be new territory for the majority. It is granite country in contrast with the traditional sandstone of the Blue Mountains and hence has a fascinating assortment of tors and boulders. It requires a steady short climb up to the Crown but is not too exhausting and there is much time for exploring.

### MEET AT MT VICTORIA RAILWAY STATION

**AT 9.30 A.M. OR AT MERRY GARTH AT 9.00 A.M.**

If you wish to meet at the Reserve near Tarana and only if you are familiar with the area, meet at 10.15 a.m. at the Reserve Car Park.

Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.

### FURTHER WALKS

Friday, 19th July 2002 Station Rock Mt Tomah.

Friday, 16th August 2002 Breakfast Creek  
Megalong Valley

Friday, 20th September 2002 Castle Head and  
Narrow Neck.

Friday, 18th October 2002 Boronia Point Mt  
Wilson from Merry Garth.

Friday, 15th November 2002 Fortress Hill off  
the Mt Hay Road.

December probably the second Friday 13th  
December The old railway line to Hartley Vale  
off the Darling Causeway.

**Please note that these walks could be subject to change.**

### BUSH CARE

**Bush care continues to make its valuable contribution to the local environment each second Friday from 9.00a.m. to Noon.**

**Remember the following dates:**

Friday 14th June Meet at the corner of Galwey Lane  
and Davies Lane Mt Wilson

Friday 12th July Sloan Reserve Mt Wilson

Friday 9th August Silva Plana Mt Wilson

Friday 13th September Opposite 'Kookootonga' Mt  
Irvine.

**For further information contact Liz Raines on 4756  
2121.**

### LIABILITY

**Libby asks that all our active walkers take note of the following statement which was in the National Parks Journal for April 2002.**

*"Every person participating in an activity conducted by the National Parks Association of NSW does so as a volunteer in all respects, and as such accepts responsibility for any personal injury, however incurred. The Association, its office bearers and walks leaders cannot accept liability in regard to any injury or damage suffered by any person while engaged in any NPA activity."* Libby feels that this statement would be a suitable disclaimer for our group. What do you think ?

### MEMBERS NEWS

Congratulations to Ray Nescia. He recently celebrated his 60th birthday !

### FOR OUR JUNE WALK CONTACT

Libby Raines 4756 2121 or Mary Reynolds 4756 2006  
or Alison Heap 4756 2055

The coloured photos on this page were contributed by Robin Woods, Hans partner who was on the May Walk. Robin sent them to me by Email !! As our photocopier does not handle colour, this newsletter is being printed by C&W Printing in Lithgow. In the first photo the persons' names are as follows left to right back row-- John Cardy, Ray Harrington Margery Young: middle row Helen Cardy, Libby Raines, Norma Quinn, Jean Crowley, Pam Woods [ a new member], Anne Clarke: front seated Geoff Kelly and Fred Roberts.

A special thank you to Robin. We were so pleased she was able to be there in May.