

**John Cardy is our writer this month and as always produces an absorbing and vivid account of this Mt Wilson walk.**

### **Boronia Point – Mount Wilson**

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2002

Boronia Point at Mt Wilson is a quintessentially Australian bushland setting --- expansive views over the Wollemi, seemingly endless ridges and valleys clothed in Eucalypt forests which generate the soft blue haze into which the landscape eventually melts. Far removed one would think from the city of Athens; however there is a connection. *Boronia* was named for Francesco Boroni, servant to English botanist John Sibthorp. Boroni died in an accident in Athens around the time of British Settlement in Australia. Our little journey of discovery on this stunning Spring day began at Merry Garth, a glorious example of Eurasian and Australian elements blending in complete harmony.

To the pleasant, pulsating rhythm of a few thousand cicadas, fourteen walkers set off down Davies Lane noting the immediate presence of tiny clusters of Orange Blossom Orchids (*Sarcochilus falcatus*) clinging to the roadside trees. We plunged in to the delightful rainforest area which borders Campanella Cottage, the Copse and Linden. Here the huge *Banksia integrifolia* is a stark reminder of there being no constants in nature; a large section now resides on the forest floor and indeed what remains standing is leaning at a precarious angle. Coachwoods (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*) grow tall and straight here as they seek access to sunlight, their column-like trunks mottled with decorative lichens. At a lower level in the forest Possumwoods (*Quintinia sieberi*) are slowly but relentlessly strangling tree ferns on which they have taken up squatters' rights. The remains of a long expired tree fern can be seen deep in the bowels of a particularly old Possumwood.

We haven't encountered chooks on any previous bushwalks but there is always a first time! They observed us from their rather swish enclosure with that strange look of curiosity and disdain which only a hen can express. The rooster meanwhile strutted around pretending he was in control, as is the case in so many "farmyards".

Soon we were at the back of Bisley where Graham Thompson welcomed us in to their magnificent park-like garden which afforded us access to the track to Cathedral Reserve. We skirted the placid lake on which a few ducks were bobbing in the morning sun and strolled though the glorious wisteria walk where the long racemes hung like a delicate pale violet curtain. Heading up the hillside we stopped frequently to take in the beauty of this property, its plantings and vistas enhanced by well placed statuary, especially the delightful mother with children, in soft flowing lines of golden sandstone.

On leaving Bisley we made our way past 'Bynn Mawn', another property, to the Cathedral Reserve where we had morning tea to the accompaniment of the ever present cicada chorus. We then proceeded via Lamb's Hill track where the native Indigo, (*Indigo australis*) provided splashes of pink and lilac in the trackside greenery, emerging near

the picnic area of the Happy Valley track head. Here we followed the route of the old Mt Irvine Road which leads past the rubbish dump with the most spectacular view in Australia. The vista across the wilderness of the Wollemi National Park is breathtaking while the flat topped profile of Mt Yengo dominates the far horizon. On reaching the junction of Farrer and Mt Irvine Roads we met Mary and Florence. The group paused here awhile, the cicadas however did not, their pounding refrain was incessant. Our journey then took us along the fire trail toward Boronia Point. The track dips slightly where several Rough Tree Ferns (*Cyanthea australis*) appear and the blossom of the abundant *Pultenaea* formed a golden mist in the gully below. Waratahs were conspicuous by their absence on this occasion only two examples in bloom were sighted by yours truly. On previous October walks in this area there was a profusion of brilliant red orbs in 1996 and a lesser but still spectacular display in 2000. Those cicadas however were still conspicuous by their presence with their endless rhythmic racket!

The terrain becomes much more open now with gnarled trunks of the Scribbly Gum (*Eucalyptus sclerophylla*) shimmering like satin in the strong midday sun. Broad-leaved Hakea (*Hakea dactyloides*) display fluffy starbursts of white along their branches, while the Golden Glory Pea (*Gompholobium latifolium*) embellishes the scene with its showy flowers. Native Iris (*Patersonia sericea*) are also plentiful here; clumps of four or five flowers were common where more usually single or perhaps two flowers are seen. The dainty heart shaped petals of the Blue Damperia (*Damperia stricta*) contrasted with the glossy green coils of the Curly Sedge or Old Mans Whiskers (*Caustis flexuosa*). A fallen tree trunk beside the track provided a convenient resting place for the group, all lined up as if waiting for the local bus! The sun beat down giving a feeling much more akin to mid summer than of spring and the constant throbbing of cicadas seemed to intensify --- will it never end?

As the track begins to descend slightly and examples of the Pale-pink Boronia (*Boronia floribunda*) begin to appear, a tiny lizard, only about 35 millimetres long, is seen (perhaps a young Tree Dragon or Jacky Lizard) its presence only revealed when it moved. A much larger specimen was seen further along the track and on the return journey a middle-sized lizard was totally unfazed at being picked up. It in fact made a determined lunge at a fly which landed on my hand.

Near the point where the fire trail ends and a narrow track leads off through the thick heath, the sublime beauty of a single Slender Violet (*Hybanthus monopetalus*) provided an exquisite foil to the parched surroundings. Boronia is now in abundance and is accompanied by Black-Eyed Susan (*Tetradthea sp*) and Pink Matchheads (*Comesperma ercininum*).

On emerging from the heath we are at the cliff edge overlooking the Wollangambe River carving its sinuous course through this rugged terrain. In this astoundingly beautiful setting we had lunch and lingered awhile to allow the splendour before us to soak into our souls. Only after spending some time here was it realized the cicadas were now only a distant hum --- relief at last!

Upon returning to Merry Garth, Libby and Keith kindly invited us into their garden for afternoon tea. Once again thank you both for your generous hospitality. A delightful way to end another very special day.

**CICADAS play a dominant role in John's description of the October Walk. If it is any comfort they have been my constant companion while I typed and produced this newsletter. M.R.**