

**In this newsletter you will be able to read about both the July and August walks written by John Cardy with his keen observations and entertaining descriptions. We hope having two accounts in this issue partly compensates for the lack of an August Newsletter. M.R.**

## **Station Rock and Camels Hump – Mt Tomah**

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2002

On the ninth of November 1804 George Caley, following an arduous journey through then uncharted territory, succeeded in reaching Station Rock. On the nineteenth of July 2002, after a pleasant stroll through some beautiful rainforest we failed! However, back to the beginning.

Frost lay thick on the ground near the stile at the end of Charlies Road where nineteen gathered on this clear, crisp morning. After negotiating the stile we traversed the open grassed ridge past the Tomah South survey point (elevation 1016 metres). The views from this ridge to the east, south and west are glorious. Ghostly shadows of the Sydney high rise were occasionally visible through the distant haze however the more agreeable landscape of these awesomely rugged mountains stood out perfectly clear in the foreground.

In this area there are numerous clumps of young Sassafras (*Doryphora sassafras*) some carrying the first flowers of the season, their dainty white petals contrasting brilliantly with the glossy dark green leaves. The path leads us away from the expansive vistas into a lightly wooded area. We veer left to enter an enchanting pocket of rainforest as we head toward the elusive Station Rock.

The abundance of Soft Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) is the first impression one gains on entering this wonderfully enclosed space. Many of these large ferns carried numerous smaller species of ferns on their trunks. One spectacular specimen was engulfed with fine ferns at the point where the stipes emerge from the trunk and these cascaded softly between the more rigid host fronds. Here also many of the tree ferns support the Possumwood (*Quintinia sieberi*) whose seeds germinate on the fibrous trunks and whose roots then grow “strangler style” down to the rich soil seeking nourishment.

As we move further down the hillside there are many huge vines hanging from the canopy, snaking their way across the forest floor and winding sinuously around tree trunks and indeed each other. In this area many of the tree ferns also take on sculptural forms as they endeavour to right themselves after having many years ago lost their grip on mother earth and leant over at precarious angles.

Suddenly we emerge from the muted light of the rainforest into open woodland as we near the edge of the scarp. Improvised markers on tree trunks are the only indication of the direction we should be following as regrowth has made the track very indistinct.

Numerous animal tracks add to the confusion. Station Rock may have eluded us but undeterred, Alison soldiered on and blazed a path through the almost impenetrable scrub to a prominent rock outcrop. Henceforth it will be referred to by this group as Alison's Rock.

Having taken in the extensive views from this craggy vantage point and partaken of morning tea we retraced our steps through the rainforest. The path down the western side of the ridge was in complete contrast. Here we were in much more exposed and dryer sandstone country. Our route wound through a dense understorey of Acacia sp which presented an enclosed "corridor" effect. Soon we emerged onto yet another rocky outcrop which carried fascinating fossil-like markings along with numerous sharpening or grinding grooves. Some of the group decided to remain at this point soaking up some sun as well as the views while the remainder continued across the saddle toward Camels Hump.

Smooth-barked Apples (*Angophora costata*) appear in this area and the parched ground is punctuated here and there by the bright flowers of the occasional Native Iris (*Patersonia sericea*) and Sydney Boronia (*Boronia ledifolia*). We now climb onto Camels Hump (named incidentally, according to the publication "Back From the Brink" by Andy McQueen, after Barry "The Camel" Dunnet, a pioneering canyoner). We cross an extensive rock shelf containing some more sharpening grooves which were irrigated by seepage from a small hanging swamp and choose an elevated vantage point as our lunch stop.

Although we had only walked for perhaps another forty minutes those who had elected to remain on the other side of the saddle were now mere tiny coloured dots on this expansive landscape. The scene before us on this crystal clear day was stunning. Looking across Thunder Gorge which carries Carmarthen Brook some 300 metres below, the vista includes Mounts Banks, Hay, Caley, Strzeslecki and Dixon. One can only marvel at the tenacity of the likes of George Caley and his companions in successfully crossing this Devils Wilderness.

On returning to our vehicles and while enjoying the usual cup of tea with, on this occasion, a cake to celebrate Libby's recent birthday Geoff Kelly provided a bonus to finish the day. He produced a fascinating set of photographs covering the construction of the zigzag deviation tunnels. These graphically illustrated another facet of the incredible human effort which has gone into the crossing and settlement of this majestic mountain range.

**In this newsletter you are in for a further treat again produced by John Cardy in his always entertaining style. A special thank you John for the July and August features. M.R.**