
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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June 2003

NOT NELLIE'S GLEN
BLACKHEATH

Our May Walk

FRIDAY 16TH MAY 2003

This walk was planned to follow the first section of the Six Foot Track into the Megalong Valley. Due to the logistical difficulties in organizing the car shuffle and the fact that the wet weather would have rendered the steep descent at Nellie's Glen rather slippery, it was decided to change the venue to the more gentle slopes of the Pulpit Rock track. So the ten walkers who had gathered near the Explorers Tree bade farewell to Nellie (and Glen), promising to return on another day and made our way to Govetts Leap Lookout.

The view at the time we arrived at the Lookout was outstanding—a clear panorama of the Govett and Grose Gorges with wisps of mist rising from the valley floor and swirling around the cliff faces. In the distance, beyond the confluence of Govetts Creek and the Grose River, the clefts in Banks Walls and the mountains behind were hung with curtains of pure white mist, adding brilliant highlights to the dark cliffs. One could have spent hours here watching the ever changing scene before us --- Govetts Leap Falls in full flight; the forest canopy far below glistening with the moisture of the overnight rain and the ebb and flow of the mist through out this gigantic amphitheatre constantly changing the vista. The imposing spire of Pulpit Rock beckoned however and we set off into the moisture laden bush. Only a few metres along the track which leads down the hillside away from the hustle and bustle of the frequently visited lookout area, we cross a tiny bridge and it is as if we had passed through some mystical portal. We are now in an enchanted place; rain water trickles freely along the path, the surrounding bush is dripping wet; on the banks above the track the water



Winter in the Bush

BUT PULPIT ROCK
TOPIC

soaked seed heads of Button Grass (*Gymnoschoenus sphaerocephalus*) looking like shiny ripe blackberries hang on their gracefully curved slender stems. This scene is illuminated by masses of brilliant white flowers of the Tea Tree (*Leptospermum sp*), their delicate five petalled blooms glowing under the leaden sky.

As we descend the stairs which have been turned into a series of mini cascades, a few examples of *Epacris reclinata* cling to the rock face, their tubular red flowers providing a vivid contrast to their surroundings. Then we enter a narrow tunnel formed by a dense stand of Black Wattle

(*Callicoma serratifolia*) which is decorated with a variety of soft ferns. Suddenly we are at Popes Glen Creek which is flowing rapidly. With the aid of a couple of logs (not Fred and George—they were the ones holding the logs) we safely crossed and began the climb up the exposed hillside.

Here mosses and lichens adorn the rock faces as tiny rivulets coursed down the hillside forming miniature waterfalls as they leapt from the numerous rock ledges. There were many examples of the Mountain Devil (*Lambertia Formosa*) here ,their presence announced loudly by their showy red flowers. On closer inspection however many tiny satanic faces could be seen peering out from among the foliage.

The way here is lit by the honey gold candles of the Heath Banksia (*Banksia ericifolia*). Flowering in profusion at this time, in some cases a dozen or more flower spikes held aloft on angular branching candelabra. In sheltered alcoves the delicate pink flowers of the Dog Rose (*Bauera rubioides*) bow their heads even lower than normal under the added weight of moisture. All along the track the Red Five- Corners (*Styphelia tubiflora*) provided splashes of colour.

Soon we arrived at a vantage point which afforded views of both Govetts Leap and Horseshoe Falls. Both of these spectacular vertical drop falls were flowing forcefully after the recent rains and immediately drew your eye. However there were numerous minor falls along the expansive cliff line which added to the overall beauty of this spectacular scene. The bushland around us and in the valley far below seems to have come alive with the rain; an event apparently also celebrated by the birdlife judging by the continuous chorus of beautifully varied calls we were treated to through out the day.

As we continued towards Pulpit Rock the valley filled completely with mist and it was easy to imagine with the distant sound of the waterfalls, that you were walking beside the ocean. The elegant charm of the flora was in sharp contrast with the rugged rock outcrops. Many had intricate patterns comprised of elaborately curved and tubular forms while one quite smooth sandstone face displayed a thick band of imprisoned smooth white river pebbles at its midpoint, the remnants probably of an ancient river bed. Many wind worn caves and rock overhangs generated thoughts of who or what may have occupied them over the years. There are magnificent examples of weather beaten Old Man Banksia (*Banksia serrata*) in this area; some two to three metres tall with twisted gnarled trunks. One half metre tall Old Man would be a prize winner in any Bonsai Show but much more prized here in its natural environment.

The Heath Banksia becomes less abundant at about the halfway point of the track but Mother Nature replaces them with the no less striking Hairpin Banksia (*Banksia spinulosa*) which tends to shyly hide its candles more within the foliage. In moist sheltered areas there are a few scattered examples of Swamp selaginella (*Selaginella uliginosa*) looking at first glance like some tiny conifer. As the path dips down to cross the last creek before Pulpit Rock this enclosed area is highlighted by the brilliant yellow blossom of a single Sunshine Wattle (*Acacia terminalis*). A little further on Helen Freeman spotted a large slug beside the track – it was cream in colour with a distinctive bright red patch on its back and a red line around its lower body. It also carried a pattern on its body similar to the “veins” in leaves. An unusual and beautiful creature and one this writer has not previously encountered. Is anyone out there familiar with this splendid looking mollusk?

We were now at Pulpit Rock Lookout with its spectacular panoramas on this occasion partly shrouded in the mist. With her usual wisdom Libby suggested we take the stairs down to the lower vantage points as the weather may soon close in. The view back along the adjacent cliff face from this low platform is stunning. The sheer vertical rock face embellished today with a waterfall, an narrow silver ribbon cascading down a cleft in the dark rock. As always there are the tenacious little cliff dwelling plants clinging to minute crevices,

defying gravity and the strong winds in this exposed environment.

As predicted light rain soon arrived so we retreated up the hill to shelter in the attractive stone shed near the car park. Here we had lunch followed by Libby's bushwalkers' cake to ward off the effects of the now chill air.

The return to Govetts Leap Lookout was a retrace of the outward journey, and although we were following the same passage, the pictures before us were quite different. Views into the valley varied by the minute with the mist momentarily parting to give tantalizing glimpses of the cliffs or the valley floor below. As we neared Popes Glen Creek the twin falls of Govetts Leap and Horseshoe were at times completely hidden and then briefly visible as though through sheer white drapes. Having negotiated the swollen waters of Popes Glen Creek, again with the help of a couple of logs, we paused awhile at the Lookout, not to admire the view for there was none but to be refreshed by the upward rush of moisture laden air. Near this area the yellow and red pea like flowers of a single Rough Bush – Pea (*Pultenea scabra*) lit up its chosen corner of the bush.

Soon we re-crossed the bridge which transported us back into the “real world” of tourist buses, cars and vans. Many were gathered at the rails of the lookout perhaps disappointed at the much reduced view before them. If only they could all experience the magical world which awaits if you just cross that tiny bridge!

A special thank you to John Cardy for that detailed and inspiring account of a walk that never loses its fascination.

Our June Walk

Friday 20th June 2003

To the WOLGAN VALLEY at NEWNES

We last visited this wonderful valley in July 2000. Prior to that visit we have to return to 1994 for our first experience in the Wolgan Valley. It is an extraordinary place. Today a peaceful, rural area but between 1906 and 1931 it was the centre of the Shale Oil Industry which created an ugly, grey, noisy environment, the total antithesis of the scene you will see in June.

As Newnes is 54 km from Lithgow, it will involve a longer drive out along the Mudgee Road, then turning off to the Wolgan Valley.

Today the historic ruins of that once busy industry are there to explore and wander through. You can choose to do that or you can participate in a walk. If you wish to see the ruins this does mean paddling across the Wolgan R. In other words there is the opportunity to come and not to have to follow a walk but still enjoy the peace and beauty of this remote valley.

MEET at COLES' CAR PARK in the LITHGOW VALLEY SHOPPING AREA at the end closest to St Patricks' School at 9.00 a.m. or at MERRY GARTH at 8.30 a.m.

Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. **Bring a towel to dry your feet if you wish to cross the river to inspect the ruins.**

FURTHER WALKS

Friday, 18th July 2003 To Mt Banks

Friday 15th August 2003 To the Cox's River or the second section of the Six Foot Track.

Friday 19th September 2003 To the Ruined Castle Jamison Valley Katoomba.

Friday 17th October 2003 Probably the Tesselated Pavements Mt Irvine

BUSH CARE

The work continues successfully at Silva Plana Mt Wilson. The number of Hollies disappearing is most satisfying. In June we are turning our attention to Galwey Lane beyond 'Merry Garth' towards Waterfall Rd. This is an area in much need of our concentrated efforts.

Join us on Friday, 13th June 2003 at 9.00 a.m. until noon at Galwey Lane. We welcome every helper so make the second Friday on your calendar Bush Care Day.

For further information contact Beth Raines on 4756 2121.

FOR OUR JUNE WALK

CONTACT Libby Raines 4756 2121 or Mary Reynolds 4756 2006

MEMBERS NEWS

One of our active walkers, Ray Nesci recently lost his father. We extend to Ray and his family our warmest sympathy and friendship over this sad loss.

THIS MONTH WE ARE MAKING A SPECIAL APPEAL to all OUR MEMBERS, but particularly THOSE WHO REMEMBER BILL SMART WHO PASSED AWAY ON 14TH JULY 1999.

It has always been our intention and that of the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society to establish a lasting memorial to Bill and his wife, Jane both of whom contributed generously to Mt Wilson and its community in many diverse ways and over a long and extended period. One of our members, Helen Cardy had

the brilliant idea of placing a fine wooden seat halfway up the path to the Turkish Bath Museum for people to rest and view the scenery of the grounds and the distant Blue Mts and Wollemi National Parks. Remember that it was Bill and Jane who made it possible for the Society to lease the Turkish Bath and the Precinct for 50 years and so provide both for the use of the community.

Jane passed away in June 1995. She, too, in her quiet way helped and supported this project and lived long enough at least to see it commence and she always encouraged Bill to participate in our walks although she was unable to actively participate herself.

Below is an extract by Libby Raines from a tribute to Bill published in this newsletter in 1999 to refresh all our memories of his deeds and life.

"As we farewell Bill, and reflect on his life I ponder what it was that made him so special to so many people.

His kindness certainly---He took a lot of people under his wing, quietly giving them the support and friendship they needed. Bill was an extremely kind and gentle man. His generosity, not only with gifts and money, but with himself, his precious time and his equipment with which he used to help others in all kinds of ways. He was very practical.

Bill's love of nature was very apparent and appealing: one learnt so much when one was with him. His knowledge of plants and the things around him made his company interesting. He had a wonderful gift of quietly passing on his knowledge to those who wanted to hear and take the trouble to learn.-----

Like all the Smarts, Bill's sense of humour was very refreshing and delightful.-----

Bill was well respected by the people he worked with in the Nursery Trade, in the C.S.I.R.O., in the Dept. of Agriculture, in the Blue Mts City Council and with the Ryde School of Horticulture. His advice on a large range of subjects was sought by many.

His sense of responsibility as he went about his daily life was very apparent to those close to him. He thought deeply, pondering over things, working methodically and always wanting to learn how things worked and why.

This sense of responsibility and his love for these mountains, firstly at Mt Irvine as a young man and then at Mt Wilson, made him deeply involved in the running, maintenance, preservation and care of this beautiful Village and the bush which surrounds it. Bill was part of every aspect of the Village and its life, and this involvement was one of his greatest joys."

So much more could be said about Bill and Jane Smart. We hope those of you who knew them will

welcome the opportunity to contribute towards this Memorial.

Members of the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society are also being approached to contribute in what is a joint venture.

On this page you will see a copy of a drawing of the seat we hope to purchase as a Memorial Seat. It is a Cotswold Design beautifully constructed from durable teak. In addition there will be the cost of a plaque to be placed on the seat and installation of the seat. These costs will be partly met from funds from the Bushwalking Group and the Historical Society.

SEE THE ATTACHED FORM TO SEND YOUR DONATION.

MEMORIAL SEAT

Cotswold Design c. \$1200.00 in teak wood.

We wish to acknowledge the assistance of **C&W Printing Mort Street Lithgow** with the printing of this newsletter.