

Western Fire Trail, Sunday Walk Spur, Du Faur Creek and the Bogey Holes at Mt Wilson

Friday 20th January 2006

A glorious way to start another twelve months of walks in these beautiful mountains; a drive through Ferny Corner and along The Avenue with the ribbon of road disappearing into the mist and the tree trunks dissolving into the film of fog above, those spreading branches still visible were sagging a little more than usual under the weight of moisture. Seen through a veil of haze the indistinct outlines of trees, ferns and vines in the rainforest lining Davies and Galwey Lanes created a mystical aura. Past the ghostly forms of the tree ferns beside the road and we are at Merry Garth, the meeting place for this walk.

The venue for the walk this month was very flexible due to the weather. Initially it was planned we would go to Joe's Canyon however this was changed to Happy Valley when the hot weather dictated a cooler location. Of course as soon as this was announced it rained and it rained and it continued to rain which unhappily made the conditions on the Happy Valley track unsuitable. Possible sites then mentioned were the Tessellated Pavements and the Bogey Holes area, the latter being the final choice as it provided several exit points along the way should the weather close in and the walk need to be curtailed.

The twelve walkers were allocated seats in cars and we set off for Du Faur's Rocks Road where we were to commence the walk once a car shuffle to Ryans Cutting had been completed. Seventy five percent of us arrived at this point which isn't too bad a result but Libby felt we should attempt to maintain our record of not losing any walkers (let alone in this case a car as well). While the car shuffle was completed others in the group attempted to locate the missing twenty five percent. They soon arrived after a pleasant diversion due to a misunderstanding about the walk location and we set off down Du Faur's Rocks Road.

It is a special experience to walk in these overcast conditions which result in a pleasant subdued light. The recent few weeks of rain and misty weather has delivered a crop of fresh new growth in the surrounding bushland where the soft green foliage is glistening through a layer of moisture. (Locals perhaps may not be so agreeably disposed towards the continuous rainy conditions). At Du Faur's Rocks the distant panoramas of course were temporarily out of order. The replacement views into fog flooded valleys and across to mist shrouded hillsides provide vistas of a different nature but no less spectacular. Mother Nature had one of her special works of art at the cliff edge. The fine foliage of a small shrub was weighed down into a weeping formation by the adhering drops of moisture which gave the appearance of the shrub being covered with shimmering diamonds, a delightful sight.

We then followed the track to the Chinamans Hat formation which passes many fine examples of sharpening grooves in the rock platforms indicating the original inhabitants

of this area knew a good view when they saw one. Beside this track there were several examples of Grass-leaf Trigger Plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*) still displaying their brilliant pink flower heads and occasional Slender Rice Flowers (*Pimelea linifolia*) provided a touch of white. We made our way down to the large cave just below these rock platforms where we sheltered while indulging in morning tea. The rock face here displays layers of ancient pebble beds and is decorated with an abundant display of *Dracophyllum secundum* with their dark green stem sheathing pineapple-like leaves.

A short climb then took us to the Western Fire Trail. Here we strolled along the undulating track past armies of ants busily constructing and repairing flood mitigation levees around the entrances to their nests. We passed a magnificent Old Man Banksia (*Banksia serrata*) its gnarled trunk decorated with mosses and lichens and its contorted limbs carrying many newly emerging soft green/grey flower spikes. Nearby, sitting atop an embankment, was a small clump of Potato Orchids or Cinnamon Bells (*Gastrodia sesamoides*) their pendulous bell shaped flowers suspended from their bare dark brown stems.

We then moved onto a grassed spur below open woodland, the Sunday Walk Spur, then veered off to descend the hillside via a narrow walking track. Here there was a cluster of Flannel Flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*) nestled against a rock accompanied by a Slender Violet (*Hybanthus monopetalus*), the effect of its tiny deep mauve petals intensified by the pure white velvety bracts of the adjacent flannel flowers. Mountain Devils (*Lambertia formosa*) were also present here carrying their tubular red flowers and many satanic little seed heads, quite green about the gills in fact, perhaps the little devils were also getting sick of the extended wet period.

Near the bottom of this slope we paused awhile at a clearing. It is at this point that the now overgrown track which leads to the Bogey Holes diverges from the more distinct track we are following. Here we are afforded a view of the conspicuous domed hill nearby which is timbered on the sheltered side and clad in low heath like growth on its exposed aspect. This landmark is referred to by Libby as Ron Naylor Hill as on the second walk undertaken by this group a little more than fifteen years ago Ron insisted on climbing to the summit. That's good enough for me; henceforth it will be referred to as Ron Naylor Hill in any future newsletters written by yours truly.

We then headed north down a relatively steep slope which took us to a "wee burn", a delightful little rill which added a musical note to the sounds of the bush as it burred its way toward Du Fours Creek. While following this little brook we came across a Scribbly Gum which was pock marked by dozens of blackened holes in its trunk, up to fifty millimeters diameter and perhaps twenty five millimeters deep, an astonishing sight the likes of which no one present had come across previously. We continued along the edge of this stream, crossed to the opposite bank, traversed a weeping rock outcrop and arrived at a rock platform overlooking Du Fours Creek.

This spot brought back many pleasant memories for some in the group for it was here in January 2000 that we climbed up a knotted rope hanging over the cliff face to exit the

canyon below. That trip took us through the deep narrow canyons of October and Du Fours Creek and graphically demonstrated just how cold that environment can be even at the height of summer.

This was deemed an ideal spot for lunch. The almost vertical cliffs opposite had been chosen by a few Eucalypts as a suitable place to grow, their trunks emerging from impossibly small fissures in the rock and then towering upward appearing to have no visible means of support. Adjacent to the area in which we were seated, emerging from the shade of the canyon below were the dark glossy green crowns of Cedar Wattles (*Acacia elata*). A short distance across the deeply patterned rock platform the apex of a large Coachwood (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*) loomed above the cliff edge. It was copiously endowed with red sepals and looked spectacular. One does not often get the opportunity to view these trees from this perspective as the crowns are usually far above you. It was interesting to note the leaves exposed to the sunlight were relatively small while deeper within the crown and at lower more shaded levels they were of a size we are more used to seeing.

Following lunch we retraced our steps back to the junction of the track which leads across to the Bogey Holes. Anyone not experienced with this area would have trouble picking up this now overgrown track but of course Libby plunged into the shoulder high growth and led us toward the saddle which runs off the flank of Ron's Hill. Once on the saddle we enter true heathland where Coral Heath (*Epacris microphylla*) dot the landscape with white while at a lower level numerous Narrow-leaf Trigger Plants (*Stylidium lineare*) display their deep pink flowers held aloft on slim stems emerging from their tiny basal tufts. At the edge of this saddle a few small Cypress (*Callitris* sp) grow, I won't even try and guess which of the three possible species they are. Also in this area are many tiny She-oaks (*Allocasuarina* sp) growing in prostrate form.

The view back to the north reveals a series of low cliffs topped with pagoda like rock formations, the cliff faces adorned with distinctive horizontal patterns. Soon we were at the area known as the Bogey Holes, clear ground beneath tall trees adjacent to large rock overhang shelters. It was at this agreeably peaceful spot back in January 1999 that we belatedly celebrated the seventieth birthday of our absent friend Hans, another fond memory which this area elicits. We then make our way to the fire trail which will lead us back to Ryans Cutting on the Mt Wilson Road. The skies have now cleared and the afternoon sun beating on our backs soon makes us appreciative of the overcast conditions we enjoyed for most of the day. Along the edge of this fire trail are numerous Hard-leaved Scribbly Gums (*Eucalyptus sclerophylla*) their silver/grey trunks shimmering in the sunlight, the intricate patterns of scribbles creating an illusion of hanging scrolls of calligraphy.

Back at the area behind the fire station with a full one hundred percent complement of walkers we indulged in the traditional cuppa, enthusiastically looking forward to the rest of the walks planned for 2006.