
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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April 2009

WENTWORTH FALLS WALKS

OUR MARCH WALK

**DARWINS WALK, ROCKET
POINT, UNDER/OVERCLIFF
WALKS AT WENTWORTH
FALLS AND WALLS CAVE
AT BLACKHEATH**

Friday 20th March 2009

In 1814 a five year old lad, born into a prosperous and well connected family, played happily at his family home in Shrewsbury on the Severn River about two hundred and twenty kilometres north west of London.

At that same time in history on the other side of the globe, an entirely different scene was being played out. About eighty kilometres west of Sydney Town, the man charged with constructing the first road across the Blue Mountains, William Cox, was building a weatherboard hut in which to store equipment.

A common thread would join these two totally disconnected scenarios twenty-two years later.

Though the hut burned down within a few years of construction the area continued to be referred to as Weatherboard. Around 1827 an inn was built across the creek from the site of the hut, the name 'Weatherboard' persisting



Autumn in the Bush

AND BLACKHEATH

for the locality. (It was not until the 1870s that the name Wentworth Falls came into general use.)

At around midday 17th January 1836 the young lad from Shrewsbury, now approaching his twenty- seventh year, arrived at the Weatherboard Inn en route to Bathurst.

Charles Darwin had arrived in Sydney Cove on board Her Majesty's ship Beagle five days earlier, having left England a little over four years prior.

While the horses were fed and rested Charles walked along the little stream (now known as Jamison Creek) to view the 'cascade'. The entry in his notebook read in part: "... most magnificent astounding & unique view, certainly most stupendous cliffs I have seen."

The 'cascade' of course was Wentworth Falls and today we will follow in Charles Darwin's footsteps on the first section of our walk.

This walk was scheduled in our programme for 2009 as it marks two hundred years since the birth of Charles Darwin and one hundred and fifty years since his seminal work *On the Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection* was published.

Eighteen walkers gathered in Wilson Park at Wentworth Falls on this perfect autumn morning only a few hundred metres from the evergreen Holm or Holly Oak (*Quercus ilex*)

planted on the eastern edge of Pitt Park to mark the site of the Weatherboard Inn.

We headed off past various plaques and signs explaining the Darwin connection and providing information regarding the native flora and fauna in the area. The benefits of continuing track maintenance and bush regeneration work quickly became evident. The creek runs clear and clean, native vegetation thrives beside the well-formed track and there was a complete absence of litter along the way. The Jamison Creek Bushcare Group and the Blue Mountains City Council must be congratulated on their work in this historically interesting and attractive little valley.

The track hugs the creek line as we pass examples of Heath Banksia (*Banksia ericifolia*), new finger-thick flower candles emerging among the foliage. At a lower level deep pink flower combs sit above the glossy holly-like leaves of *Grevillia acanthifolia ssp acanthifolia*. Pouched Coral-fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*) envelops the creek banks in light green swaths. Among the stands of various Tea-trees (*Leptospermum sp*) and Bottlebrush (*Callistemon sp*) stood a multi-stemmed Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*) quite striking even when devoid of flower heads.

The track crosses and re-crosses the creek as we meander downstream. The morning sun illuminates the pale trunks of a group of eucalypts on the hillside opposite. The water cascades over a rock shelf into a placid pool created by a dwarf stone wall then tumbles down a series of ledges as it continues on its way. A little further on, below a low waterfall, the stream becomes wider and shallower as it ripples across a pebble bed beside a wide sandbank and sweeps below an impressive rock overhang. Below the next cascade a sandy beach surrounds a shallow pool. There are many very pleasant scenes along this little creek.

These visual delights are accompanied by the wonderfully varied and lyrical sounds emanating from this tiny rill. The gentle gurgling as water runs down a gradual slope

into a shallow pool, the staccato beat as a myriad droplets of water seeping from a hanging swamp plummet into the muddy bank, the burbling of turbulent water squeezing through rock crevices and the rhythmic splashing as cascades tumble over rock faces. A symphony of sounds which fade and swell as we follow this pleasant path.

Presently we arrive at the aptly named Weeping Rock. A filmy curtain formed by water exuding over a huge jutting rock at the centre of the creek line, falls to the rocks below. Off to one side the main volume of flow cascades in a silver ribbon. The rock platform below this attractive feature provided an ideal morning tea spot. As we settled down we were joined by an inquisitive White-browed Scrubwren which ventured quite close to Libby before darting to the dripping rock face in search of food.

“... suddenly & without any preparation, through the trees, which border the pathway, an immense gulf is seen at a depth of perhaps 1500 ft (450 metres) beneath ones feet. ... The class of view was to me quite novel & certainly magnificent.”

Charles Darwin's entry in his diary, quoted in part above, regarding his first sighting of the view from Wentworth Falls still holds today. The sight that suddenly came into view shortly after we continued on has remained largely unchanged in the one hundred and seventy three years since Darwin first marvelled at the grandeur.

We slowly negotiated the stepping-stones across Jamison Creek at the top of the falls in order to take in the vast panorama stretching out over the Jamison Valley and beyond, also to savour the view back upstream of the Queens Cascades.

Once across the creek we divert to the left off the main track and climb up to and through a craggy wind-worn natural arch and arrive at Rocket Point Lookout. This vantage point affords another aspect of the upper section of Wentworth Falls and views across to Mount Solitary. The name Rocket Point derives from an early trust member. No, not because his

name was Mr Rocket, it was George Murray. It is believed George fired rockets or flares from this point to signal to family members on Mount Solitary. The eye is drawn back up stream to the beautifully proportioned form of Yester Grange nestled on the hillside. This lovely old home was built in the 1870s and was once owned by Sir John See, NSW Premier from 1901 to 1904. We lingered here enjoying the array of views on offer then followed the loop track which delivered us back to the top of Wentworth Falls.

After a quick visit to Fletchers Lookout we set off along the Undercliff Track. This track passes through a range of microclimates with sudden changes from moist protected glades to quite dry exposed windswept areas. We drop down to Eagles Nest Lookout with its wonderful views of the falls then continue on below huge rock overhangs dripping with moisture. Soon we cross Den Fenella Creek and follow its course down through a secluded ferny glen to the Den Fenella Lookout with its expansive views to Mt Solitary and beyond.

Back on the main path, which had now morphed into the Overcliff Track, we continued on past the (temporarily closed) turnoff to Lady See's Lookout, another link to Yester Grange. Along this section of track are examples of the Cliff Mallee Ash (*Eucalyptus cunninghamii*) which are confined to cliff edge sites in the Upper Blue Mountains.

Soon we emerge into low heath below a large hanging swamp. Memories flooded back of the last time we were in this location, February 2008. Helen, my better half, who is known 'round these parts as Swamp Lady almost disappeared in the murky sludge on that occasion. Others in the group obviously remembered this incident. As Helen and I rounded a bend there was the whole group assembled on the other side of the swampy section, looks of anticipation on their faces. Will Swamp Lady put on an encore performance? Alas no, she reverted to her other trick of walking on water and crossed the swamp without leaving a footprint.

We carried on to Lyrebird Lookout. Here there was a slight and very rare miscue. We turned onto a track which led us to the Shortcut Track and up to the Conservation Hut rather than carrying on as intended to the junction with the Valley of the Waters Track. We decided to make use of the facilities here and paused for lunch.

We had intended to end this walk by doing the Nature Track circuit, it was however decided to leave this for another time and to explore the shorter track to Walls Cave back at Blackheath. For various reasons five walkers decided to call it a day at this stage and the remaining thirteen drove to Evans Lookout Road.

As we began the descent to the cave the track was lined with a large number of Mountain Devils (*Lambrtia formosa*) most in flower and many displaying numerous devilish little seed capsules. The open woodland here contains Black Ash or Silvertop Ash (*Eucalyptus sieberi*) and Sydney Peppermint (*Eucalyptus piperita ssp piperita*). A huge termite mound sits beside the track, a golden monument to these industrious little recyclers of the bush.

Lower down the slope the woodland gives way to open heath and hanging swamps. The Dwarf She-oak (*Allocasuarina nana*) grows in profusion on this windswept hillside, carrying at this time their female flowers, tiny scarlet starbursts clinging to their stems.

Soon we drop down into a small gully and the reverberating sound of falling water gives a hint of what lies ahead. We arrive at the entrance to a narrow canyon with a view through a tall tunnel to a sunlit rock face beyond. The sound of an unseen waterfall echoes through the cavern and the water issuing from that fall, the waters of Greaves Creek, pass below our feet.

We then follow a serpentine line of stepping-stones down the centre of the creek and arrive at Walls Cave. This huge curved amphitheatre was formed by swirling water as the creek turned sharply at this point. Archaeological excavations in the cave have revealed evidence of Aboriginal occupation dating back

at least twelve thousand years. Among the artefacts found were chert flakes. Chert is a light coloured, compact quartz based rock, almost glass-like, which presents a sharp edge when flaked, ideal for tool making. A seam of chert lies adjacent to Beauchamp Falls on Greaves Creek downstream of the Grand Canyon.

What a wonderful space this is in which to sit and contemplate all nature of things including the one hundred and forty vertical metres we have to climb to get back to the cars. The steady climb was made easier for this writer by the sighting of several Parsons Bands Orchids (*Eriochilus cucullatus*) along the way. These delicate tiny orchids with their two white sepals with just a hint of pink added a touch of softness to the rugged terrain.

Another marvellous day in the bush - what wonders these mountains hold!

John C

A Message from Mary Reynolds

My warm gratitude for the generous comments about my recent 80th birthday. It was a delightful celebration from my family and my good friends of Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine and the Bushwalking Group.

It also marks my retirement from the production of the Bushwalking Newsletter with which, in its variety of forms, I have been involved since May 1990. It has been a special privilege over those years.

It is now entirely in the hands of John Cardy, a gifted writer and an inspiring bushwalker, ably assisted by Helen Cardy, a great organiser.

Mary Reynolds

Many thanks Mary for your tireless efforts over those nineteen years from everyone in the group.

(We will endeavour to justify your rather lavish endorsements Mary - Helen & John C. And yes Helen is a good organiser - boy can she organise!)

OUR APRIL WALK

Friday 17th April 2009

Bushrangers, Breathtaking Bluffs, Bird's-eye Views

Little Zig Zag, Wilsons Glen and Rienits Pass at Mt Victoria.

The group last visited this venue in November 1996. This is a circular walk of approximately 4km and is rated as medium grade. There is a 250m descent and ascent. It includes the mystery of the Bushranger's Cave, open woodland, rainforest, enclosed glens and stunning views.

The walk will commence at the far end of Kanimbla Valley Road at Mt Victoria. However this road consists of two discontinuous sections so to avoid possible confusion please meet at Mt Victoria Station at 9.30 am or at Merry Garth at 9.00am.

Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 after 7pm, Mary Reynolds on 4756 2006 or Helen and John Cardy on 9871 3661.

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 15th May 2009 – Nellie's Glen and First Section of the Six Foot Track

Friday 19th June 2009 – Castle Head and Narrow Neck

BUSH CARE

Bush Care is held on the second Friday of each month from 9am to Noon. Any help, even for a short time, would be appreciated both by the other workers and by the native vegetation.

No April Bush Care (Good Friday)

8th May 2009 at Wynne Reserve

12th June 2009 at Sloan Reserve

10th July 2009 at Sloan Reserve

Contact Libby on 4756 2121 for details