
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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IKARA RIDGE AT **OUR NOVEMBER WALK**

**IKARA RIDGE to IKARA
HEAD at MT VICTORIA**

Friday 19th November 2010

What on earth, you may well ask, have the Flinders Ranges to do with our November walk? Not a lot actually, except for the name 'Ikara'. Here it is the Aboriginal name for a throwing stick or club while in the dialect of the Adnyamathanha people (pronounced ad-na-mut-na), traditional custodians of the Flinders Ranges area, it means 'the meeting place'. An appropriate subtext as fourteen walkers came to meet at this place on a beautifully misty morning to explore the ridge which reaches out toward the Upper Grose Gorge.

(The name Ikara was selected by Myles Dunphy as the map outline of the long neck comprising this ridge and headland resembles the shape of a throwing stick or club.)

We welcomed Libby and David Salkeld from Mt Tomah who were joining us today on the first of what we hope will be many walks with the group.

Welcoming us into the open woodland as we passed a small cairn marking the start of the track were the brilliant yellow globular



Summer in the Bush

MOUNT VICTORIA

flowers of the Narrow-leaf Drumsticks (*Isopogon anethifolius*) and the showy three-petalled flowers of the Silky Purple-flag or Native Iris (*Patersonia sericea*). Ahead, a short distance into the forest, the bright red globe of a single Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*) beckoned us to enter. (There was some discussion during the day on the derivation of the name 'Isopogon'; as was suggested it is from the Greek. 'Isos' being equal and 'pogon' beard; referring to the white woolly appendages on the scales of the cones.)

I find this to be one of the most pleasant walking tracks in these mountains; an at times inconspicuous 'natural' path that meanders unobtrusively through the vegetation, its gentle twists and turns leading your eye to differing aspects of the bush. As we proceed through this open woodland the edge of the track is dotted with the slightly crimped sky-blue petals of the Blue Damperia (*Damperia stricta*). We then encounter several colonies of Slender Violets (*Hybanthus monopetalus*), their small blue/mauve flowers having such tiny side petals that the much larger lower petal appears to be the only one present, thus the species name. Hiding shyly amongst the ground cover pink flowers of the Dog Rose (*Bauera rubioides*) are suspended, hanging on slender stems.

Evidence of the fires which swept through this area four years ago can be seen in the dark scars on the bases of the Hard-leaved Scribbly Gums (*Eucalyptus sclerophylla*) adding intriguing sculptural features to the silvery grey trunks. Tree stumps along the way and logs lying on the forest floor display blackened surfaces while the charred fibrous bark of the Brown Barrels (*Eucalyptus fastigata*) suggest Black Barrel as a more suitable name for these examples of the species. The brilliant green foliage of several Broad-leaf Geebung (*Persoonia levis*) along the track brighten the scene.

Soon the woodland becomes more sparse and we are treated to a display of the delicate flowers of several Tea Trees species. Included were the pink flowered Round-fruited Tea Tree (*Leptospermum sphaerocarpum*), the creamy/white flowers of the Yellow Tea Tree (*Leptospermum polygalifolium*) and the large white and pink blossom of the *Leptospermum macrocarpum*.

We divert to the left and settle down on a rocky outcrop which normally overlooks the headwaters of the Grose River across to the Darling Causeway; today that is all concealed by a veil of mist. Mother Nature always provides alternative points of interest however and a bejewelled spider web suspended between two small shrubs caught the eye. The beautifully woven network of threads carried minute droplets of moisture glistening in the subdued light; well deserving of a photograph.

Shot captured, now where is my lens cap? Not in the camera bag as is usual, I must have dropped it nearby. Fred Roberts noticed my 'emu parade' progress and joined in the search to no avail. Now, I am admitting to nothing, but it would be a good idea to check your pockets before instigating an extensive search should you ever misplace a lens cap.

We move into more open country as we continue along the ridge and are treated to a blaze of wildflowers. The landscape is now divided into compartments, each containing a different mixture of flowers. Conspicuous clusters of the tiny white blossom of

Coneseeds or Smokebush (*Conospermum sp*) dominate the first area and are accompanied at a lower level by masses of white flowers of the Coral Heath (*Epacris microphylla*). Next, large drifts of Flannel Flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*) are encountered; their mainly unopened buds, weighed down with moisture from the mist, bow atop slender stems – a magnificent sight. In the following compartment pink mounds crowd against rock outcrops; soft pillows of Pale-pink Boronia (*Boronia floribunda*) present a stunning display. Not to be outdone by the Boronia a sea of Pink Kunzea (*Kunzea capitata*), fluffy flower heads undulating gently as the almost imperceptible breeze wafts over them, decorate the next alcove.

Scattered among the dominant flowers in each of these compartments, adding to the kaleidoscope of colour, are many of the myriad native flowers which inhabit these mountains. The blue flowers of the Paroo Lily or Blue Flax Lily (*Dianella caerulea*), the brilliant yellow blossoms of the *Goodenia dimorpha* and the dense clusters of lilac to pink flowers with prominent yellow stamens of the Rush Lily or Vanilla Plant (*Sowerbaea juncea*) to name just a few.

Interspersed between these fields of wildflowers, adding another perspective to the landscape, are several rock outcrops. There are low platforms carrying exquisite moss gardens; swaths of emerald velvet nestled under rock ledges that are encrusted with light green and orange lichens. Other outcrops form elevated pillars decorated with twisted veins and sills of ironstone which have been exposed by the erosion, over millennia, of the surrounding softer sandstone. We stood atop one such pillar to take in the western views across the valley; the cliff lines now partially exposed as the mist began to rise.

(I should mention here that some, of little faith, had scoffed at my earlier and admittedly wildly optimistic prediction of the weather lifting; we who are foolish enough to make weather predictions must highlight our occasional successes.)

We now move through an area containing examples of the Dwarf She Oak (*Allocasuarina nana*), many carrying tan male flower spikes on the extremities of their stems, and of the Cliff Mallee Ash (*Eucalyptus cunninghamii*), dense grey/green foliage held aloft on numerous slim grey stems. Also noted beside the track in this locality was a magnificent specimen of the uncommon root-parasitic shrub *Atkinsonia ligustrina* carrying an abundance of flower buds.

Presently we emerged from the heath onto a series of rock platforms separated by scattered pockets of vegetation; we had arrived at Ikara Head.

Our feeling of pleasure as we gazed into and across the gaping chasm before us, taking in the sight of majestic cliffs dropping down to the Grose River far below, would not have been shared by Hamilton Hume when he arrived at this point in 1827. For much of our walk today we had been following in the footsteps of Hume and his party as they endeavoured to find a passage between One Tree Hill (Mt Victoria) and the route west discovered by Archibald Bell Jnr four years earlier in September 1823. Hume may well have cursed the landscape we were admiring as it forced him to backtrack almost to Mt Victoria where he was able to cross the shallower valley at the source of the Grose. He then followed the ridge linking Mt Victoria to Bell and named it Darling's Causeway after Governor Darling. He was able to claim the reward offered by Governor Darling for the person who found an easier route west; a grant of 1280 acres was received.

We paused for lunch at this magnificent eyrie. The view directly across the gorge was to the majestic Kamarah Bluffs; sheer cliffs which bring an abrupt end to Kamarah Ridge. A little to the west are the cliffs beneath Koombanda Ridge; below these cliffs is the now closed Canyon Colliery, part of the access road can be seen winding through the bush. It was perhaps at the end of a hard day that these two features were named, for the names are both Aboriginal terms for sleep. To the east the course of the Grose River can be seen winding

through the forest below the talus slopes under Wilkinson Hill; mist still shrouds the summit of this prominent landmark. What a wonderful spot to partake of lunch, enjoy a slice of Libby's legendary bushwalking cake and to relax for a while.

Following lunch some in the group explored the edges of the headland discovering the most amazingly shaped rocks. Sculptured cliff edges, contorted rock shelves, intricate wind-worn cavities and thin ironstone ledges with jagged apertures and fissures – all this against the backdrop of the gorge. The arid harshness of these rocky areas was softened by the presence of the exquisite small basal tufts of the Narrow-leaf Trigger Plant (*Stylidium lineare*), spiky leaf balls carrying flower stems with buds about to burst into life; Mother Nature was just showing off now!

And then it was time to wend our way back along the ridge. As is usual, walking the same track in the opposite direction reveals features unnoticed at the first passing. Skirting below a rocky prominence past some twisted and gnarled Old Man Banksias (*Banksia serrata*) one 'Old Man' was spotted growing high on the rock face, emerging from an impossibly small cleft in the rock. At another outcrop several Dragons Tails (*Dracophyllum secundum*) were clinging to the ledges, displaying their pink-tinged white tubular flowers. The mist had now lifted from Ikara Gully to our left where Girraween Cave is situated, very aptly named as it is Aboriginal for 'abundant wildflowers'.

As we continue toward our starting point the lifting cloud cover opens up views across the headwaters of the Grose River to the Darling Causeway. The track then swings left and leads us back through the open woodland to Victoria Falls Road to bring to an end a very special walk

We then make our way back to Mt Victoria Cemetery where some cars had been left this morning. We paused in this quaint old graveyard for our usual end of walk cuppa. There are reminders here of other walks we have undertaken. Fading headstones struggle

to maintain the memory of the Rienit and Berghofer family names; names applied to sections of tracks we have trodden in the past on the outskirts of Mt Victoria. Wonderful places cemeteries; they put things into perspective.

John C

OUR DECEMBER WALK & END OF YEAR / CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Friday 17th December 2010

Open Woodland and Heath, High Vantage Points, Valley Views, Intriguing Pagoda Formations.

Jinki Ridge off the Bells Line of Road

This is a new venue for the group. A short gentle walk just long enough to build an appetite for our end of year / Christmas luncheon to follow at Merry Garth (see details later). Views into the Upper Grose Gorge and some unusually weather-sculpted rock outcrops are just some of the features.

Meet at the cleared parking area beside the Bells Line of Road (left hand side when heading west) 3.25 kms west of the junction of Mt Wilson Rd and Bells Line of Road at 9.30am or at Merry Garth at 9.15am. If travelling from the Mt Victoria or Lithgow direction the meeting place is 3.75 kms from the junction of the Darling Causeway and Bells Line of Road (immediately past the line of centre concrete dividers on the bend at Flagstaff Hill).

Please take extreme care with traffic passing at speed, there have been many accidents at this spot. If travelling from the west it is suggested you continue on for about a kilometre where you will find a relatively safe area to stop and do a U-turn and return to the meeting place.

Bring morning tea only on the walk.

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 (after 7pm) or Helen and John Cardy on 9871 3661 or on mobile 0418 646 487 if you need to leave a message.

END OF YEAR / CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Thanks once again to the generous hospitality of Libby, Keith and Beth the end of year luncheon will be held in the glorious grounds of Merry Garth. Ex-walkers, family and friends are more than welcome.

Meet for lunch at 12 – 12.30pm.

The revised format tried last year proved popular and we will continue in that vein this year. Ham, Turkey, Dessert, Tea and Coffee will be provided from funds.

Please bring one item only from the following selection **to share**: Any salad type dish, savoury or sweet slices, or cheese.

As usual please bring your own nibbles, plates, cutlery, glasses and drinks.

To assist with catering please advise Helen Cardy as early as possible if you are coming and, to avoid over and/or under supply, which of the shared food you would prefer to bring.

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 21st January 2011 – A Mt Wilson Ramble

Friday 18th February 2011 – The Grand Canyon and Neates Glen at Blackheath

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.

10th December 2010 at Wynne Reserve

11th February 2011 at Sloan Reserve

Contact Libby or Beth Raines on 4756 2121 for details