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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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## BELLBIRD POINT AND IRONPOT MOUNTAIN

## TOPIC

### OUR MAY WALK

**BELLBIRD POINT and  
IRONPOT MOUNTAIN in the  
MEGALONG VALLEY**

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012**

Heading toward our Blackheath meeting point we drove along Wentworth Street through a blaze, nay, an inferno, of autumn colour. An avenue of trees carrying leaves of crimson, carmine, cerise and claret intermingled with foliage of saffron and gold; a stunning sight. Albert Camus, French novelist, dramatist and essayist, Nobel laureate for literature in 1957, put it so succinctly when he wrote: "Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower".

A bracing breeze greeted the fifteen walkers who gathered in Hat Hill Road under a clear blue sky. 'The Candy Man', Bob Bearup arrived and distributed liquorice allsorts to the group; nothing like a high-level sugar fix at 9.00am. Libby soon had us organised into four vehicles and we set off, some of us on a sugar high, for the drive into the Megalong Valley.

As the road drops into the lush rainforest which thrives along the tributaries of Pulpit Hill Creek, day almost becomes night under the dense forest canopy. We pass Coachwood Glen where tree ferns abound, cross the creek via a narrow wooden bridge and soon emerge once more into bright sunshine as we enter the



Winter in the Bush

farmlands on the valley floor. The sun is temporarily blotted out once more as we enter an eerie cloud of fog swirling in the middle of the valley. Soon we drop down a steep pinch in the road which leads us into an entirely different landscape. We are in a verdant little vale, an overwhelmingly vivid greenness pervades, carpeting the paddocks and hillsides; we have arrived in the aptly named Green Gully.

Bernard O'Reilly, in his book 'Cullenbenbong', tells of visiting Green Gully, the property of his uncle and aunt,

Bernard and Mary Carlon, in 1910 as a seven year old; his first trip away from his childhood home in the Kanimbla Valley. He talks of a 'big bushy sapling' being tied to the rear of the sulky to steady it as it descended the steep pinch we had just negotiated. He recounts sleeping on the 'earth-floored verandah' of the old farmhouse, which we also passed today, still standing beside the road. Nestled above Carlon Creek it has managed to withstand the ravages of nature and time though it is showing signs of succumbing to the elements. Bernard O'Reilly wrote: "That, my first holiday, was the beginning of a love for Green Gully which has ever grown with the years; it is a place of that complete peace and quiet happiness which we like to think of as being in store for us in that Better Land beyond the turmoil of this world. It is the only place I ever want to go for a holiday, the only place I ever think of in times of worry or trouble". One can

well understand a locale such as this leaving such an impression.

We continue along the road which rises steeply out of Green Gully and delivers us to the Myles Dunphy Park; the starting point for our first walk of the day.

A short steep climb delivers us to the track that leads to Carlon Head and beyond, we turn right off this track after about one kilometre and head along Bellbird Ridge. The open woodland here contains many Smooth-barked Apple (*Angophora costata*) and Thin-leaved Stringybark (*Eucalyptus genioides*). In the understorey there are many Narrow-leaf Geebung (*Persoonia linearis*) displaying their rough flaky bark and carrying a few small fleshy fruit. At a lower level there are spiky shrubs of Prickly Moses (*Acacia ulicifolia*) displaying, at this time of the year, just a few pale cream flowers along their stems of needle-like foliage. The soft feathery foliage of the nearby Sunshine Wattles (*Acacia terminalis*) contrast markedly and display abundant golden flowers.

Soon we divert to the cliff edge for a view back to our start point, down to Carlon Creek and across to Ironpot Mountain, our after-lunch destination. We continue on toward the end of the ridge through some fine examples of Forest Oak (*Allocasuarina torulosa*) with their fluted corky-looking yet quite hard bark. Now we are at the rocky crags on the end of the ridge; Bellbird Point - a perfect place to pause for morning tea and to be serenaded by the tinkling of the bell miners.

The views from this eyrie are outstanding. Below us Breakfast Creek courses its way to the Coxs River; a route this group has followed on a number of occasions. To the south the seemingly never-ending folds of the peaks and valleys of the rugged Wild Dog Mountains stretch into the distance. Off to the east, below Lyrebird Ridge, the long gaping mouth of a large cave can be seen in the face of the sandstone cliff. How fortunate we are to be here on a day such as this, the imposing landscape stretching out before us beneath a clear cerulean sky; absolute bliss.

We retrace our steps back to our starting point and take advantage of the unusual luxury of tables and seats to settle in for lunch. Just as we were about to leave for the short drive across to the Ironpot Mountain trackhead a truck arrived carrying a marquee to be erected for the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual North Face100 Ultra Marathon which was scheduled to pass this way tomorrow. Starting and finishing at The Fairmont at Leura this is a 100km event through this mountainous country with a 28 hour cut off limit; sounds like plenty of time doesn't it.

A short drive of about one and a half kilometres takes us to the Ironpot Mountain trackhead. Here the track we are to follow has been marked with fluorescent pink ribbons indicating the route of the marathon. Initially we are walking through gently undulating farmland where a friendly horse is grazing; it laps up the rubs and pats offered by Michael Ihm.

We pass through the first of two gates - someone ahead shouts back that the gate has to be closed; Bob Bearup and I are the last through. The chain is passed through the gate but the eyelet, which for some reason has an old bootlace wrapped around it, will not reach over the pin. We lift the gate - no good, we force the gate down - still no good, we push and tug to no avail wondering out loud why the old bootlace was wrapped around the eyelet. Now, a Pharmacist and a Design Draftsman / Engineering Officer should be able to work out how to fasten a gate. Then the penny dropped, it was the loop in the bootlace which went over the pin; didn't take us all that long did it Bob?

The gently undulating path suddenly begins rising at a slope of more than forty-five degrees and yes, the pink ribbons continue to lead this way. A sign declares the 40km mark of the marathon route, less than half way; now I'm sure that would really lift a competitor's spirits. We climb between two large boulders and are soon back on more gently sloping ground. The tree cover consists of Grey Gums (*Eucalyptus punctata*) and the same stringybarks as seen on Bellbird Ridge. Broad-

leaf Geebung (*Persoonia levis*) are spread through the understorey and on the more sheltered slopes the glossy leaves of a few Kurrajongs (*Brachychiton populneus*) stand out among the more muted colours of the forest.

Two lyrebirds are heard nearby running through their extensive repertoires and a couple of dancing mounds were seen in the area. (No, the mounds were not dancing, the lyrebirds dance upon them.)

We now pass a large outcrop of conglomerate consisting of water worn stones ranging in size from small pebbles up to almost football size boulders embedded in a sandstone matrix; much of the initial section of the ridge consists of this material. The protruding stones on the face of these outcrops are covered in light silver/grey crusts of lichen and in shaded areas thick moss is moulded over the knobbly surfaces. Clumps of Rock Lily (*Dendrobium speciosum*) cling to the higher edges of these outcrops. We drop down into a small gully then climb past some even larger conglomerate outcrops and are on the ridge of Ironpot Mountain.

Here there are several intriguing circular holes in the rock platform. They are about one hundred and fifty to two hundred millimetres in diameter, some forming hemispherical depressions, others much deeper than their diameters and a few had undercut rims. Are these a natural phenomenon or the work of Aboriginal inhabitants? Perhaps they are a combination of both; there are axe grinding and sharpening grooves in the area. As we proceeded along the ridge there were many more examples of these intriguing 'wells'.

It was these features which led to the naming of Ironpot Mountain. As stated in Jim Barrett's 'Place Names of the Blue Mountains & Burratorang Valley' it is believed Tom McLaughlin, who settled on Galong Creek in 1892, applied the name as the holes resembled the old iron pots and saucepans. The names of other local features such as Tinpot, Tarpot, Quartpot and Ironmonger followed as a consequence.

Continuing along the ridge the pink ribbons reminded us that large numbers of people will be running along this route tomorrow, probably oblivious to the beauty of their surroundings. The views off to our right down toward the Coxs River are magnificent with the craggy outcrops of conglomerate in the foreground; I doubt any runners will notice.

Closer at hand there are numerous Nodding Blue Lilies (*Stypandra glauca*) with their shiny green stem-clasping leaves arranged in the one plane as they climb up the stem; a few are displaying some early blossom hanging on thin nodding stalks, blue flowers with bright yellow filaments. Also along this ridge are several Sweet Pittosporum or Mock Orange (*Pittosporum undulatum*) with their glossy dark green leaves with wavy margins. Other plants sighted include the Narrow-leaf Myrtle (*Austromyrtus tenuifolia*) a small shrub with narrow leaves having curled edges and the partly parasitic Native Cherry or Cherry Ballart (*Exocarpos cupressiformis*) a shrub with graceful drooping cypress-like foliage.

We follow the ridgeline to a small cairn which marks the point where the track divides. The left-hand branch leads off to Ironmonger Hill and then drops down Ironmonger Spur to the junction of Breakfast Creek and Coxs River. The right-hand branch leads out to Tinpot Mountain which overlooks the junction of the Jenolan and the Coxs Rivers. We turn and retrace our steps back toward our starting point.

Along the way, as we are making the descent of the very steep slope off this mountain, the Hydro Majestic can be seen sitting on the edge of the distant escarpment. Bernard O'Reilly wrote that as young children who were yet to see their first town, first train or first electric light, they often gazed across the valley and saw: "---- red sunset light reflected in the myriad windows of the great Hydro at Medlow, perched proudly above the distant cliffs like the castle of dreams which it was to us".

Back at the cars we watch the afternoon sun light up the cliffs below Black Billy Head as

many bon voyage wishes are bestowed upon Libby for her upcoming trip with Keith to Switzerland and beyond. There appears to be a pattern emerging here, the last time we did this walk, in May 2006, we were wishing Libby and Keith bon voyage for a trip to Switzerland. We also offered best wishes to Libby for a special occasion preceding her trip; the welcoming of a new daughter-in-law into the family when Peter and Linda are wed in the gardens of Merry Garth.

As we drove out of this beautiful valley, which we had enjoyed at a leisurely pace, my mind went back to that 40km sign on the steep incline of Ironpot Mountain. I thought of the runners as they realised they were not yet half way into the ultra marathon and the looks of utter despair on some of the faces. But to finish as we started, with a quote from Albert Camus: "Alas, after a certain age, every man is responsible for his own face".

Note: The leading runners completed the course in less than 10 hours!

John Cardy

## OUR JUNE WALK

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2012**

**Valley Views, Cascades and Waterfalls,  
Ferny Glens and Lush Rainforest**

**Leura Forest Circuit with a Twist**

The group visited the Leura Forest in April 2011. Then we approached from the Katoomba side; this time we will start on the Leura side with a little twist on the approach to the forest. There will be a choice between two exits. Those wanting a little exercise and wishing to experience the sublime beauty of Fern Bower will exit up the stairs back to the Leura Cascades car park. Those looking for an easier exit will have the opportunity to proceed to the Scenic Railway for a ride to the top. **Don't forget money for the fare - \$11.**

For the Fern Bower option there is a descent and subsequent ascent of approximately 280 metres and the walk distance is approximately 7km; it is rated as hard. For the Scenic Railway option the distance is also

approximately 7km but of course there is very little uphill effort; it is rated as medium. Those walkers will be picked up at Scenic World and brought back to the start point at Leura.

**Please Note: Libby and Keith will be overseas for most of June therefore only one contact number and one meeting point is nominated for this walk.**

**Meet in the Leura Cascades upper car park in Chelmsford Drive just off Cliff Drive at 9.00am.**

(When you call in Helen or I will let anyone travelling from Mt Wilson know of any others who have called in and are also leaving from Mt Wilson; you may be able to organise a car pool between yourselves.)

Bring morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea and plenty of water.

**Contact Helen and John Cardy on 9871 3661 or on mobile 0418 646 487 if you need to leave a message. NB: We will not be available on the landline number after the evening of Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June.**

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## FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July – Hassans Walls at Lithgow

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> August – Sassafras Gully and Magdala Creek at Springwood

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## 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.**

**8<sup>th</sup> June at Wynne Reserve**

**13<sup>th</sup> July at Wynne Reserve (Planting)**

**Contact Libby or Beth Raines on 4756 2121 for details**