
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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January 2013

CRAB CREEK LOOKOUT

TOPIC

OUR DECEMBER WALK

NORTHERN FIRE TRAIL
and CRAB CREEK
LOOKOUT at Mt WILSON

Monday 17th December 2012

As we begin a brand new year who knows what the next twelve months will bring? Astrologers and Fortune-tellers, when attempting to predict the future, refer of course to the horoscope to determine the position of the planets. Being rather sceptical, scarcely aware of my own position in the scheme of things let alone that of the planets, nor having a clue as to what I may be doing in the next five minutes, I make no attempt at foreseeing future fortunes. Instead, let us throw the crystal ball into reverse and gaze back via the twelve signs of the Zodiac and the lore of the ancients, on our *past* fortunes; the wonderful bushwalks we have experienced over the last twelve months.

January saw us taking a stroll through the Mt Wilson Village to the Church of St George and the Turkish Bath before descending into the overwhelming greenness of Happy Valley. The babbling brook, tiny waterfall and limpid pool surrounded by ferns and mosses make this an enchanting spot. How appropriate that the sign of the Zodiac for this time is Capricorn (the Goat); a goat would be quite at home making the climb out of the valley.



Summer in the Bush

Aquarius (the Water Carrier) is the sign for our February walk. A walk where we descended the spectacular stairs past the curtain of water which is Wentworth Falls, traversed the National Pass track cut into the cliff face and ascended through the Valley of the Waters past tumbling streams and cascades. We arrived at the Conservation Hut just as the heavens opened with a heavy downpour. Is it possible our day was influenced by the stars of Aquarius?

In March we ventured onto the Newnes Plateau to visit the amazing pagoda formations of the Lost City; turrets of sandstone and ironstone extended across the landscape. Decorated with convoluted ironstone ledges, pipes and balconies they presented a wonderful spectacle. Pisces (the Fishes) is the sign for this month. There surely cannot be any connection with piscatorial creatures at this dry high-altitude location, but wait - the oceans of the Sydney Basin once extended beyond Lithgow; fish could well have been swimming here before the plateau was uplifted. I just may be starting to catch onto the messages hidden in the stars.

Aries (the Ram) is the sign for our next walk in April. This walk took us to a series of stunning waterfalls and through a majestic coachwood rainforest north of Lawson. On this walk there was much discussion on the true identity of a formation known as Turtle

Rock as no one in the group could discern the form of a turtle. There was conjecture as to whether it actually represented a frog or perhaps a Labrador. Now, a cross between a frog and a large dog, dare I suggest, could well have been the image of Aries the ram hidden in the stone.

May found us at Bellbird Point and Ironpot Mountain in the Megalong Valley. Stunning valley and mountain views were enjoyed while being serenaded by the song of the bell miners; the intriguing circular pot-like depressions on Ironpot Mountain remain a mystery. Taurus (the Bull) is the sign for this month. In Saxon lore the month of May is known as 'Thrimilce' when cows can be milked three times a day; quite apt as it is obvious I'm having trouble milking some connection to Taurus the Bull for this walk.

In June, while Libby and Keith were away in Switzerland, I led the group to that mystical spot, Leura Forest. Here we soaked up the otherworldly ambience among the huge moss-cloaked tors beneath the towering giants of the rainforest. One could argue that the power of the Zodiac had an influence on this walk. Gemini (the Twins) is the sign for June and indeed the group split in two on leaving the forest; some taking the Scenic Railway exit while the rest climbed out via the Fern Bower. (I think I am catching on to this seeing signs business.)

Cancer (the Crab) is the sign we were under for July and certainly there was a real nip in the air when we visited a new venue for the group, Hassans Walls above Lithgow. Without a sideways glance, we climbed the steep track to Braceys Lookout and made our way to Hassans Walls; stunning panoramic views were on offer from both these vantage points. July in ancient Saxon lore was known as Mædmonath, the meadow month. Indeed we were treated to magnificent meadows of low, wind-clipped heath on this walk. (This is becoming a little bizarre.)

Springwood was the venue for our August walk and it can't possibly be just a coincidence (can it?) that lions are famous for

springing to catch their prey and Leo (the Lion) is the sign for this month. (I can see the beginnings of a career as a fortune-teller evolving here.) We were treated to beautiful rainforest in Sassafras Gully and Magdala Creek and to silver strands of water dropping into a wide jade pool at Martins Falls. Along most of the walk we were serenaded by the wonderful symphony created by the running waters of the creeks. The uncanny influence of the ancients was also present here. The Saxon name for August was Weodmonath, the weed month; there was actually evidence that workers had recently been removing exotic weeds from the rainforest. (This is getting a little spooky now!)

In September we explored the network of historic tracks behind the establishment where the 'beautiful people' once frolicked, the famous Hydro Majestic Hotel. I can't believe it is simply coincidence that Virgo (the Virgin) is the sign for this month. We visited the astounding rock formation at 'Marks Tomb' and followed well made but overgrown tracks to 'The Squeeze', a narrow stairway between two vertical rock walls. We clambered down an old steel ladder and through narrow natural tunnels to reach 'The Coliseum' where level areas had been created beneath a high overarching cliff face by an array of beautifully constructed dry stone walls. Hærfestmonath, the harvest month, was the Saxon name for September. Produce was indeed once harvested for the Hydro Majestic at the Valley Farm below the lookouts we visited on this walk. (There are just so many uncanny links emerging between the stars, ancient lore and our walks; my scepticism is starting to wane.)

When we weighed up what we saw on our Dunns Swamp excursion there was a fine balance of the subtle and the spectacular. No surprise really for this October walk fell under the sign of Libra (the Balance); the influence of the stars is becoming undeniable. On one side of the scales was the beauty of the azure waterway, the deep-green reed beds, the stunning White Gums and the Black Cypress Pines along with the impressive domed

pagodas of the Dunns Swamp area. These were equal in my mind to the spectacle we were treated to on the way home; the cliffs of the Capertee Valley and Pantoneys Crown set alight by the afternoon sun – truly a fine balance between two vastly different landscapes. October to the Saxons was Winmonath, the wine month. Now, if one could sit at Pearsons Lookout sipping a good red as the setting sun illuminated Pantoneys Crown it could perhaps tip the balance toward this aspect of the day. Ancient lore again seems to provide an answer.

The eerie correlation between our walks and old lore continues - you simply have to look for the signs; I think I feel a conversion coming on. November in the French Revolutionary Calendar was known as Brumaire, the mist month. When we visited Lockley Pylon in November we had mist in truckloads. At times our vision was reduced to perhaps forty metres, maybe even less. Libby however still managed to guide us to the summit of Lockley Pylon; more importantly she also managed to get us back to the cars. The absence of long views concentrated our minds on the plethora of wildflowers on display, a multi-hued carpet of blossom glistening with minute beads of moisture. Scorpio (the Scorpion) is the Zodiac sign under which we walked to Lockley Pylon; there could well have been a sting in the tail of this adventure in the mist but for Libby's careful leadership.

And so we come to our December walk. Now Chiron, the kind and wise half man / half horse centaur who taught Achilles in his youth, was placed among the stars by Jupiter as Sagittarius (the Archer), the sign under which we set off on this walk. The target today was to enjoy some of the Mt Wilson surrounds and build up an appetite for the lavish luncheon awaiting us on our return.

A pleasing rollup of twenty-five gathered at Merry Garth on a very pleasant misty morning, unlike the pea souper of our previous walk. We welcomed Freda Moxom, who has recently joined, and longer-term members Nancy Fox, Bruce Arnold and son Robbie; all

four on the first of what we hope will be many walks with the group. It was great to have Ray Nesci's grandson Luke with us once again; many in the group have watched Luke's journey from a young boy of eight ("Nearly Nine!") through to the pleasant young man he is today.

We set off along Galwey Lane, the grass underfoot glistening with moisture, and headed up Waterfall Road. From my usual position as whip at the rear of the group I watched the leading walkers disappearing into the mist below the avenue of overarching trees. The stables and coach house at Wynstay were barely visible while across the road in the grounds of Bebeah there was a magnificent display of roses, their brilliant colours enhanced in the subdued light.

We paused in the grounds of the Church of St George while Libby gave a short talk on the history of the church and the surrounding grounds and graveyard. I found it interesting to hear of Tom Kirk's concern regarding his burial plot. Tom was the grave-digger for this small cemetery and late in life took it upon himself to dig ten graves, including his own, which were backfilled with sand until required; apparently visitors wondered, on seeing so many fresh graves, if some terrible plague had hit the community. Gives a whole new meaning to "digging one's own grave" and "having one foot in the grave"; Tom had both feet in his grave long before it was necessary.

We then made our way down to the Northern Firetrail and headed toward the vicinity of Cathedral Reserve. Along the way Libby explained how important this trail is to the defence of the village and pointed out an area which was recently repaired and improved by members of the community.

Soon we were climbing onto Lambs Hill to follow the track which is one of the exit routes from the Wollangambe Canyons. Presently we were among dozens of tall Rough Tree Ferns (*Cyathea australis*) their tall slender trunks holding aloft crowns of drooping fronds; these trees, some shrouded in mist, presented a

primeval atmosphere. As we descended there was a sudden change in vegetation as we moved from basalt to sandstone territory. We now moved through Forest She Oaks (*Allocasuarina torulosa*), Broad-leaf Geebung (*Persoonia levis*), displaying their delicate yellow flowers, and Banksias - both Old Man and Hairpin (*B. serrata* and *spinulosa*).

Suddenly we were at Crab Creek Lookout, a rocky outcrop overlooking (surprisingly enough) Crab Creek and the Wollangambe River. The mist limited the views but the grandeur of this landscape was still evident. On the return journey we diverted through that jewel in the crown of Mt Wilson, the Cathedral of Ferns and completed a glorious morning by walking through the pocket of rainforest along the Back Track to Merry Garth. Now for that lunch!

Reflecting on my journey of enlightenment through the signs of the Zodiac I mused if the influence of the stars is so great surely the walk to Crab Creek Lookout should have occurred under the sign of Cancer (the Crab); perhaps the power is not that great after all. Then I discover, in Dante's *Inferno*, that Chiron, that 'kind and wise' centaur, is the keeper of the lake of boiling blood in the seventh circle of hell. Shock and horror! I'm shattered, this is pretty heavy stuff, I think I'll retreat to muddling along happily as a sceptic.

So we come to the end of another wonderful year of walks with a sumptuous celebratory luncheon among treasured friends; no need for signs from the stars here, there is simply no doubting the contentment and merit in that.

John Cardy

LOST – Nay - FOUND PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

Libby has a collection of sundry items including serving spoons, a biscuit tin, etc left by guests not only from this year but also from previous years. Should someone from this year's function be wondering why they are getting wet next time they are walking in the rain it is because their navy coloured umbrella

is still at Merry Garth. Libby would love to be able to return these items to their owners.

OUR JANUARY WALK

Friday 18th January 2013

Open Forest and Views onto the Wollangambe or Enclosed Rainforest and an Historic Timber Mill

Boronia Point or Mathies Track and the Old Mill; depending on the weather (both at Mt Wilson)

The decision on which venue we will undertake will be made when we meet at Merry Garth on the morning of the walk.

Should the conditions be mild we will walk to Boronia Point through open woodland along a ridge and to a vantage point with views down onto the bends of the mighty Wollangambe.

In the event of it being a rather hot day we will venture into the rainforest behind Merry Garth and visit the Old Timber Mill before returning through the deep rainforest of the Waterfall Walk.

Meet at Merry Garth at 9.30am.

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

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.

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 15th February – Nature Track and more at Wentworth Falls

BUSH CARE

Bush Care is held on the second Friday of each month from 9am to Noon. Any help would be appreciated.

11th January at Ferny Corner

Contact Libby or Beth Raines on 4756 2121 for details