
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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DUNNS SWAMP EXCURSION

TOPIC

OUR OCTOBER WALK

EXCURSION to DUNNS
SWAMP with VARIOUS
SHORT WALKS

19th October 2012

swamp, n. **1.** a piece or tract of wet, spongy land; marshy ground; an area of still, often stagnant water. **2.** a tract of soft, wet ground having a growth of certain kinds of trees, but unfit for cultivation.

These Macquarie Dictionary definitions of a swamp do not evoke perceptions of a desirable place to visit; the reality, in the case of Dunns Swamp, is decidedly different. Come with us on an excursion to this little gem nestled on the western fringe of the Wollemi National Park.

Nine walkers gathered early in the morning at Merry Garth and a vehicle rationalisation by Libby had us ensconced in two vehicles for the drive to Lithgow. Along the way we passed the forlorn-looking collapsed remains of the majestic old oak tree which had stood for so many years beside the road near the Zig Zag Railway; a victim of the recent heavy snowfalls. At Lithgow we met another five eager walkers. We welcomed Rosie Walsh and Stephen List for the first of what we hope will be many walks with the group; Rosie and Stephen have recently purchased Chimney



Spring in the Bush

Cottage at Mt Wilson. A second efficient allocation of people to vehicles by Libby had a convoy of four heading toward the Castlereagh Highway. Many thanks to Stephen, Allan and Tim who, along with yours truly, took on the driving duties.

On passing Wallerawang and Mt Piper Power Stations, their cooling towers billowing white clouds of water vapour, this writer had a slight touch of nostalgia having been involved in the design of the high voltage switchyards at both locations, in what now seems

like a far distant past life. Leaving behind these symbols of the necessities of a 'civilised' existence we passed through the tiny rural villages of Cullen Bullen, Ben Bullen and Capertee; the bucolic scenery punctuated by massive rocky ramparts illuminated by the morning sun. We turned right at Ilford, noted the idle cement works in the distance as we approached Kandos and continued on to Rylstone where a finger sign pointed the way to the Wollemi National Park and Dunns Swamp.

We were now driving through magnificent gently undulating grazing country. Exotic trees surrounded the scattered homesteads and formed avenues along their access driveways, their light green new foliage contrasting markedly with the darker foliage of the mistletoe-festooned eucalypts that dotted the pastures. A backdrop of mountains completed

the idyllic scene; some flat topped with vertical walls above talus slopes - others, more distant, rising to sharply peaked summits.

Being in the third vehicle to arrive in the parking area at Dunns Swamp I was surprised to see a Water Dragon sunning itself very close to where the other vehicles had already parked. It stayed put with its tail curled up and forward, scorpion-like, completely unfazed by the moving cars or by we curious onlookers crowding around for a close up view.

Following the rather long but very pleasant drive to reach this delightful spot it was decided morning tea would be in order before beginning our first walk for the day; the Water Dragon was still in the same spot when we eventually set off.

A second surprise to this first time visitor was the size of the body of water even though, as yet, the full extent was not visible. As we made our way along the Weir Walk track the views across the reed beds and water to the rocky shores beyond were marvellous. The lush green of the reeds complemented the grey of the rocks and the brilliant blue of the sky, as seen above and as reflected in the smooth water. To our left was a magnificent cave formed by a long protruding rock overhang and there were many examples of Mother Nature's sculpting skills; intricately shaped wind-worn hollows exposing the golden heart of the sandstone against its grey exterior. There were some wonderful examples of very old White Gums (*Eucalyptus rossii*) here, flared and bulbous bases with horizontal wrinkles and rounded protrusions on the lower trunk, all encased in smooth silver-grey to white bark; a sight to behold for any lover of trees.

Just past Platypus Point, a rocky protrusion that affords lovely views across the water, we followed the track through a short tunnel of Tea-tree and other shrubbery and emerged into a more open area. Here there were many examples of the Tea-tree on display. One was possibly the Small-leaf Tea-tree (*Leptospermum parvifolium*) displaying many white flowers with just an occasional slight tinge of pink. Another was the Round-fruited

Tea-tree (*Leptospermum sphaerocarpum*) which has relatively large pink flowers with a green central cup, as both the common and scientific names imply they have spherical or egg-shaped seed capsules. Also present here and in many other gullies were the Fringe-myrtles (*Calytrix tetragona*) carrying copious quantities of scented five-petalled star-like pinkish flowers.

We then skirted around the base of a rock face, aided by a handrail, below some more impressive wind-worn sculptures and climbed a ladder then some rough-hewn steps to emerge at a lookout which gave more expansive views of the body of water. From this elevated spot the Black Cypress Pines (*Callitris endlicheri*) appeared more prominent, their tall conical outlines distinctive among the more spreading trees. Looking along the meandering formation of these captured waters it is hard to visualise the appearance of the landscape before any weirs were built. Apparently it consisted of a chain of waterholes along the line of the Cudgegong River. The Wiradjuri people lived around this chain of ponds for more than 20,000 years sourcing food from the abundant flora and fauna. The only enduring traces they left on the landscape are some scarred trees and faded stencil images of hands and other objects. We continued on to the dam wall which caused the partial submersion of that remnant of the history of human occupation along the Cudgegong.

Later chapters in the story of human activity in the area were added when the township of Kandos was established in 1913; the NSW Cement Lime and Coal Company setting up to exploit the local reserves of limestone. The present Kandos Cement Works were under construction in 1925. In 1929 Kandos Cement Works replaced a smaller weir built lower on the river with a second wall to store water for piping to the cement works; this wall created the water storage area now known as Dunns Swamp. Cement was manufactured at Kandos until as recently as September 2011 when production stopped, resulting in the loss or transfer of ninety-eight jobs. (On the 4th

September this year Kingsgate Consolidated entered into a four month Memorandum of Understanding with the owners of Kandos Cement Works with a view to perhaps modifying the plant to process silver ore from a possible mine near Lue where they are at present carrying out exploratory drilling. Possibly a positive for Kandos, perhaps a negative for Lue.)

The curved dam wall is a rather impressive structure, much higher than I had imagined, and indicated that the waters of the Cudgegong River held back behind the wall are indeed quite deep in places.

We then followed the course of the river below the dam to the next major feature. The Long Cave, so named because it is, consists of a very long rock shelf having a bullnosed front edge that curves back under in a deep wave formation to create this extended shelter cave. The ceiling is decorated with curious circular clusters of small stalactites at points where moisture, obviously carrying dissolved minerals, seeps through. The rear wall is embellished with an intriguing pattern of cream, gold and orange surfaces interspersed with irregular lines of brown. A very impressive sight, I heard someone comment: "Why travel to Wave Rock in WA".

We then made our way back to the Pagoda Lookout track junction. Here there were examples of the exquisite bright yellow blossoms of the Pagoda Daisy (*Leucochrysum graminifolium*) on display. This quite rare plant only grows in the vicinity of pagoda formations in areas such as this and on the Newnes Plateau, often in minuscule deposits of soil on the pagodas themselves. Here some of the group decided to continue on back to the picnic area while six decided to tackle the climb onto the pagoda formations. These pagodas are quite different to those at the Lost City, Goochs Crater and near the Glow Worm Tunnel on the Newnes Plateau in that they have very few ironstone inclusions. This means there is a decided lack of protruding ledges, ridges and spines resulting in a far more rounded smooth form and a light grey appearance; they are no less spectacular

however. Both the close up views of the formations and the far-flung vistas from atop these pagodas are stunning.

Following a pleasant lunch beside the water we took the Campsite Rocks Circuit which incidentally is wheelchair accessible, a great innovation in a place such as this. This track led us around the grey domed rock formations which have, in places, golden wind worn undercut sides; ancient hand stencils are also viewed on this circuit. This short walk ended our visit to Dunns Swamp; the spectacular vistas however were not over.

A sign on the Castlereagh Highway declares the Capertee Valley to be 'the widest enclosed canyon in the world'. Tourist brochures declare it to be the world's second largest canyon, one kilometre longer than the Grand Canyon but, in typical tourism promoter's vernacular 'not quite as deep'. Irrespective of statistics it is a place of immense beauty. Driving east through the lush green pastures of this valley with the afternoon sun touching the faces of the rugged surrounding cliffs with a blush of colour was a delight.

At Libby's suggestion we paused at Pearsons Lookout just east of Capertee to partake of the usual after walk cuppa; she knows all the right places. Central in the panoramic vista before us is the mesa (or is it a butte) of Pantoneys Crown. An island of stone in a sea of eucalypts, flat topped with sunlit rugged cliffs rising out of the surrounding tree-clad talus slopes; truly a sight to behold. Looming from the shadows on the far side of the valley was the distinctive conical form of Tayan Pic, its summit standing at 1154 metres. It is said this mountain is occasionally capped with a dusting of snow, perhaps the heavy falls of last Friday would have produced just such a magical sight.

And so our excursion to Dunns Swamp drew to a close as we made our way home. How lucky we are to have such wonderful landscapes on our doorstep.

wonderful, adj. **1.** excellent; delightful; extremely good or fine. **2.** of a kind to excite

wonder; marvellous; extraordinary; remarkable.

This Macquarie Dictionary definition eloquently describes the feelings and emotions evoked by our visit today; eminently suitable to describe Dunns Swamp and the Capertee Valley.

John Cardy

MEMBER NEWS

On the 17th May 1990 Ellis and Mary Reynolds joined fifteen others for a walk to the Tessellated Pavements at Mt Irvine; the inaugural outing for this walking group. As many of you would know, Ellis has been confined to hospital for about the last thirteen weeks. Unfortunately the decision has now been made that Ellis needs to move into a care facility. Ironically, for someone who was such a keen walker, it is his legs which are causing much of his main problem; a severe lack of mobility with all of its attendant complications. Ellis is now at the Anita Villa Care Facility at 2 Penault Avenue Katoomba NSW 2780 Ph 4782 6255.

Our very best wishes and thoughts are with you both Ellis and Mary

OUR NOVEMBER WALK

Friday 16th November 2012

Mountain Vistas, Valley Views and Wildflowers in Profusion

Lockley Pylon off the Mt Hay Road north of Leura

The group last visited this venue in November 2008. This walk has the rocky crags of The Pinnacles, beautiful heathlands, wooded flanks of Mt Stead and spectacular 360° views from atop Lockley Pylon. This is an easy to medium walk of about 8km return with ascent and descent of 160 metres.

Meet at Leura on Mt Hay Road in the 'dip' just past Churchill St at 9.30am or at Merry Garth at 8.30am. (Note: Should it look like being a very hot day we will move to a more shaded venue. That decision will be made at the Leura meeting place.)

There is no direct access to Mt Hay Road from the Western Highway at Leura Primary School. When travelling from Sydney it is necessary to approach via the roundabout above the tunnel, turn right and travel back down the hill to Mt Hay Rd via Britain St or Victory Lane and Churchill St. Those travelling from the Katoomba side should also approach via this roundabout. There will be a vehicle rationalisation at the meeting point for the drive of approximately 10km to the track head. Four-wheel drive vehicles would be most welcome.

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)

MONDAY 17th December – A morning walk to Crab Creek Lookout at Mt Wilson followed by the End of Year Christmas Luncheon. (As the third Friday in December this year falls very close to Christmas Day it is proposed to bring our walk and luncheon forward to **Monday** to avoid conflict with other yuletide commitments.)

Friday 18th January 2013 – A walk in the Mt Wilson vicinity – details later

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.

9th November at The Avenue (Meet at Sloan Reserve)

14th December at The Avenue – Ferny Corner (Meet at Sloan Reserve)

Contact Libby or Beth Raines on 4756 2121 for details