
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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EVANS CROWN AT TARANA

TOPIC

OUR SEPTEMBER WALK

EVANS CROWN at TARANA

Friday 19th September 2014

“At Tarana Station there is a watering-place for the engines. It is a pretty place, but dull. The country appears to be poor, and the mode of farming rather careless. The fencing is extremely rude and picturesque – a mere separation of the land by felled timber, heaped together.

There is one hotel at Tarana – Fawcett’s. Here you can get a carriage, or buggy, and go to Mutton Falls, westerly – about 4 miles off. From the Mutton Falls you can ride or drive to a small township called Oberon – a good agricultural settlement, with mineral resources – and go on thence to the Fish River Caves. Tarana, 85 miles from the Fish River Caves, is the nearest point of the Line to those vast Limestone Caverns. There is some nice scenery along the road in that direction.”

This is the entire, rather unflattering entry for Tarana in The Railway Guide of New South Wales of 1879 - nary a mention of Evans Crown.

Assistant Land Surveyor, George William Evans, would not have been amused by this omission. Sixty-six years earlier, while surveying the route of what was to become Cox’s Road to the site of Bathurst, his diary



Spring in the Bush

entry for the 1st December 1813 included: “My course is down to the Rivulet (Fish River); it appears to lead me north of west. On the north side of it at this place is a remarkable Sugar Loaf Hill having a stone peak of it, which I named after myself.”

Evans Crown. How very royal of him, George was obviously not the shy, retiring type.

Following the rationalisation of vehicles at Merry Garth and Mount Victoria we set off in three cars for the trip to Evans Crown Nature Reserve; many

thanks to Freda, John and Tim for providing the transport.

What a pleasant trip, the weather perfect and the undulating countryside in such beautiful condition; deep green pastures aglow in the morning light, especially so in the locality of Sodwalls. I have always found that to be a rather odd, evocative name; one is so tempted to say there is sod all at Sodwalls - but I won’t.

Waiting for us at the Reserve entrance, after a five minute drive from their property, were locals Jenny and Greg Dargan; Jenny signed up with the group following her walk with us last month – it appears we must have done something right.

This brought the number of walkers to fifteen and we set off on the short climb up onto the ridge. The approach route from the car park, initially across a fairly level area populated

with Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda australis*) and Common Bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*) gives no hint of what awaits at the summit. We climb through open woodland beneath the spreading crooked-branched crowns of the Apple Box (*Eucalyptus bridgesiana*) and the pendulous branches of the Ribbon Gums (*Eucalyptus viminalis*). Beside the track there are many quite large Blackthorns (*Bursaria spinosa*), their bark deeply furrowed with age.

As we gain elevation the eye is drawn not toward the summit but out to the farmland below. A mosaic of verdant paddocks stretch out to the tree-clad hills in the distance. Gravel roads wind through the scene leading to farmhouses dotted sparsely across the landscape. What an attractive bucolic scene it is laid out before us.

Soon the track and bare patches of ground nearby are seen to contain more and more pink-tinted gravel. Shallow mounds and rounded humps of partially exposed boulders dot the hillside. In a hint of what is to come a large domed boulder sits upon a rock platform, atop this boulder resides a large bell-shaped rock. We are approaching the 'Land of the Giants' – Mother Nature's sculpture garden of granite monoliths.

We make our way past a mushroom-like formation; a huge rounded cap sitting atop a stony stem. Then a giant balloon-shaped tor flaring from what appears to be an impossibly small base into a large dome-shaped edifice; with granite at about 2650 kilograms per cubic metre this 'balloon' is definitely destined to stay grounded. There are rounded and egg-shaped boulders, huge in their own right, yet dwarfed by the contoured granite inclines on which they sit; many appear to be precariously clinging to their positions.

These amazing edifices start their life underground as molten rock. Huge blocks, essentially rectangular in shape, are formed due to movement and faulting as cooling occurs. Water seeps into these cracks taking off the sharp edges and making the blocks more rounded. Much of this reshaping takes place underground, however, once the

landscape is eroded sufficiently to expose the granite, weathering accelerates, creating the wondrous forms we see today. The granite consists of silica and two of the common rock-forming minerals, mica and feldspars. The soils on this reserve are so sandy and erode very easily because the mica and feldspars weather very readily to leave behind only the grains of silica; the pink-tinged sands we see along the track.

As well as the amazing array of sculptures the ridge is dotted with caves and small passages beneath and between the granite tors. After a leisurely morning tea we leave our packs and climb up to one such passage and squeeze through (at least I squeezed through – others probably glided) to a rock platform which gives us amazing views of the granite cliffs and down to the farmlands below. A huge slab, which gives the appearance it had been softened and moulded onto the rounded summit, caps one area of the cliffs above us.

On the return to pick up our packs we are treated to a panoramic view to the west, the centrepiece of which is a granite tor towering above the tree line. This tall monolith is curved and creased in such a way that it is known colloquially as Bum Rock; perhaps not the most edifying of names yet it is not hard to see why it has been applied.

As is her wont, Mother Nature often provides exquisite contrasts in the landscape. At the spot from which the above panorama was viewed she has placed a beautiful little foil to the grandeur of the scene. Nestled against a large granite boulder is a single Groundsel (*Senecio macranthus*), its many flowers, brilliant yellow rays of long narrow petals, light up this little corner.

Through the trees there is a formation that, to my rather weird imagination, resembles a thatched hut; we head in that direction for a closer look. Indeed, sitting above vertical walls of orange containing a dark 'door' is the sloping form of a thatched roof; an image direct from a Pacific Island. Adjacent to this formation is an amazing sight. A roughly triangular-shaped boulder with rounded

corners impossibly balanced on one such corner on the edge of a larger boulder. An astonishing sight; more so because a small tree has decided the top of this completely bare tilted rock would be a good place to grow.

We now pass an area containing gargantuan haystack-shaped tors and rounded pillars composed of layers of circular flattened boulders, all against a background of the lush green farmlands below.

Libby now leads us through a sheltered little gully to the base of an astounding granite wall. A jumble of huge boulders stacked upon one another, light grey in colour, and beautifully embellished with velvet swathes of brilliant green mosses; a delightful scene.

We skirt past this wall and climb to a small tunnel; there is a distant view back to the thatched hut and balancing rock from here. The tunnel leads us to a sunny sheltered area, an ideal place to pause for lunch.

The azure sky, now streaked with thin cloud, is bisected by the vapour stream from a passing plane. Against this sublime background twin slender columns of granite tower above us, obelisks to the majesty of Mother Nature. Contrasting with the slenderness of those columns are huge house-sized tors, some very angular with large overhangs, others with gently curving profiles. A wonderful array of statuary to enjoy while partaking of lunch and a slice of Libby's freshly baked bushwalker cake, another work of art.

We circle back toward the spot where we reached the ridge, passing along the way a huge concave rock outcrop sloping up to a background of Ribbon Gums silhouetted against the sky, their smooth white trunks illuminated by the sun. Then above us two massive, almost spherical tors appear to defy gravity as they sit overhanging the edge of a steep cliff.

Presently local knowledge kicks in when Jenny leads us through a tiny grove of Native Cypress, possibly the Black Cypress Pine (*Callitris endlicheri*), onto a granite platform

from which there are uninterrupted views to the east and south east while Crown Rock towers above.

From this vantage point there is a view down to Jenny and Greg's nearby property and not far beyond that, across the Fish River, the red roof of Marion and Bob Bearup's house can be seen; what magnificent views of The Crown would be had from those two homes.

We spend some time at this magnificent eyrie taking in the expansive distant views and studying the intriguing patterns and textures of the granite surface resulting from lichen growth and weathering.

Moving on we are transported from this wide-open space to the enclosed environment of a large cave formed beneath gigantic monoliths. There is a low man-made wall at the entrance, possibly the work of rock climbers establishing a camp site, and a steeply sloping floor leads up to a large triangular window; ledges at this window provide convenient seating from which to take in the views on offer.

As we make our way back to the track that leads down off this amazing place it is easy to appreciate, having experienced just a small area of the reserve, why it was, and indeed is, a place of significance to the Wiradjuri people. A meeting place, a place of initiation, a place of ceremony, a place with sites of significance to men and of women's sacred sites. It would be easy to become connected to this land.

Continuing down the track we encounter some more examples of the Groundsel, flamboyant brilliant yellow flowers demanding attention. Here there are two varieties, the *Senecio macranthus* seen earlier with its long narrow pointed petals and the Variable Groundsel (*Senecio lautus ssp dissectifolius*) with its shorter petals having rounded tips; both add a golden touch to the scene.

A little further down the track, nestled against granite boulders, are several examples of the Early Nancy (*Wurbea dioica ssp dioica*), a small herb with exquisite creamy-white six petalled star-like flowers, some with a purple

centre, and tiny purple stigma nodules atop fine styles; an unusual and delicate little flower. The common name derives from the fact it is one of the first flowers to appear in the new winter-spring season.

And what of Evans, the man who 'crowned' himself? George was granted £100 and 1000 acres near Richmond in Van Diemens Land. He continued with surveying duties both in NSW and Van Diemens Land, returned to England under a cloud of corruption accusations which were not pursued, then six years later returned to Sydney. Being an artist of some note, he became Drawing Master at Kings School in Parramatta. He outlived two wives and had, it is said, "at least twelve children". Did they lose count or simply mislay one or two. With that thought we end another wonderful walk exploring the jewels in Evans Crown.

John Cardy

FAREWELL ARTHUR DELBRIDGE

Arthur Delbridge, long time member of this group and founding Editor in Chief of The Macquarie Dictionary has turned his final page; he left us on the 3rd October.

Emeritus Professor Arthur Delbridge had a long and distinguished career in academia; I will leave others to detail that in another place.

I will talk of Arthur, a walking companion and dear friend. Arthur first walked with this group in the misty rain of a May morning to the Wollangambe River in 1992. One of nature's gentlemen is perhaps an overused expression; in Arthur's case it is a huge understatement. Always welcoming, always genial, an unassuming, charming gentle man; it was an honour, a pleasure and a privilege to spend time with Arthur.

Often it is little things that say so much. A nurse who cared for Arthur in recent times told Florence that in the 20 years she had been doing this work Arthur was the nicest man she had encountered; says it all really. Our heartfelt thoughts are with you Florence.

OUR OCTOBER WALK

FRIDAY 17th OCTOBER 2014

Wide Open Panoramas, Narrow Enclosed Canyons, Fern Glens, Cascades, Waterfalls

The Grand Canyon at Blackheath

This is one of the classic Blue Mountains walks; the group last visited this jewel of the mountains in February 2011. The main circuit is 5.5 kilometres with a descent and subsequent ascent of about 350 metres. There is a rather steep climb in fairly open country from Neates Glen back to Evans Lookout Road to finish this walk. We may make diversions to Beauchamp Falls and into a narrow canyon on Greaves Creek.

Meet at Neates Glen Car Park in Evans Lookout Road, Blackheath at 9.30am or at Merry Garth for an 8.45am departure.

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.

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 21st November 2014 – Ikara Ridge at Mt Victoria

Friday 19th December – Boronia Point then our end of year Xmas lunch at Merry Garth

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.

10th October – Meet at Wynne Reserve

14th November – Meet at Wynne Reserve

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121