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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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## JELLYBEAN POOL AND RED HANDS CAVE

TOPIC

### OUR JULY WALK

**JELLYBEAN POOL and the  
RED HANDS CAVE  
CIRCUIT at GLENBROOK**

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2014**

Caught red handed dipping into the jellybean jar; what child hasn't experienced that embarrassing predicament? Today we will encounter red hands and jellybeans of a quite different nature, yet no less enticing, as we dip into the sublime beauty bottled up in the Glenbrook Area of the Blue Mountains National Park.

Neither flood nor fire, sleet or snow shall keep Libby, our leader, away from a bushwalk; they can occasionally however cause her to be a trifle late. Such was the case today when snow and ice caused the closure of the Great Western Highway, forcing Libby to turn back and travel via Bells Line of Road. Libby rang Helen and suggested we head off when the group was ready; she would bypass Jellybean Pool and go directly to The Causeway, meeting us there rather than at the entrance gate to the National Park.

Thus nine leaderless walkers assembled at the park gates, milling around and shuffling aimlessly, knowing not what to do. I assured them that I knew the way and persuaded them to follow; perhaps the well-signposted path convinced them to trust me.



Winter in the Bush

And so we set off from this wonderfully refurbished entrance area to head for Jellybean Pool. The track leads us fairly steeply down the hillside as it shortcuts across the curves of the road that snakes its way down to the Jellybean Pool car park, which has also been refurbished; wonderful to see some money being spent in our national parks.

We now descend steps, cut into the sandstone, which lead us past rock platforms and beneath craggy cliffs to a point that gives us a view down to the

pool. Indeed, with a little imagination, one can discern the shape of a jellybean; the sand of a large beach forms the inside curve while the outer curve is formed by a series of rock ledges. The surrounding bush is reflected in the pool, slightly distorted by the wind-rippled water.

We spend some time here enjoying the surroundings, now out of the strong winds which, it can be seen, is still buffeting the trees high above on the ridges. Presently we make our way upstream along Glenbrook Creek on a sometimes faint, sometimes non-existent track. Along the way we pass some fine examples of Water Gum (*Tristania neriifolia*) their trunks and branches contorted into amazing shapes by the force of floods. We arrive at The Causeway and find a sunny spot in which to relax while awaiting the arrival of our leader.

Presently the familiar figure of Libby is seen descending the road. (Probably more familiar than she realises, for later in the day, while we were having lunch at Red Hands Cave, a passing lady was heard to say, sotto voce, to her partner: "There's that lady from Mount Wilson"; how fame spreads.) With Libby back at the helm, and me back at my usual position of whip, we set off along the track to Red Hands Cave.

This track quickly rises above creek level and contours along the line of Camp Fire Creek. There are views down to clear ponds and numerous swirl pools in rock shelves then up above us to magnificent shelter caves with intricately sculptured ceilings and walls. We pass the first of several Yellow Bloodwoods (*Corymbia eximia*) that we are to see today with their distinctive rough-textured but soft, scaly, creamy-brown bark. Today we also encounter many of the *Corymbia*'s close cousin, the Smooth-barked Apple (*Angophora costata*) whose smooth, tactile bark contrasts markedly with that of its near relative.

We arrive at a spot where the track divides; there is a more often used high road and a lesser-used low road along the creek line. Also at this point is a sun-drenched area with ample natural seating and we pause for morning tea. Here there are examples of the Blueberry Ash (*Eleocarpus reticulatus*) a delicate small tree still carrying some of its small glossy blue berries. While most of us are content with the food we have brought, Peter Carr-Boyd is moved to taste one of these berries; we await news of his survival or demise.

Suitably refreshed we continue, taking the low road; we will make use of the high road on our return journey. There is some scrambling over large boulders initially, the track then meanders beside the creek. Here the Umbrella Fern or Shiny Fan Fern (*Sticherus flabellatus*) thrives in this shaded damp environment; multiple parasols of shiny, light green fronds held aloft on fine stems. Soon the low road merges once more with the high road and we cross a small footbridge to continue along Camp Fire Creek. A short path at a bend in the

track leads off to a rock platform overlooking the creek, now a surprising distance below.

The main track descends to once more meander along the creek bank. In a section of flat rock beside the creek there is a quite unusual impression. An elliptical groove about one hundred and seventy millimetres on its long axis surrounds an egg-shaped mound; there are two narrow pointed grooves radiating out from one side of the elliptical groove. Some man-made symbol or one of Mother Nature's little tricks? Perhaps we will never know and just sometimes that is no bad thing.

A little further on there is a small eroded cave on the high side of the track; the exterior is dark weathered sandstone decorated with patches of lichen and moss. The interior is smooth cream and golden sandstone patterned with darker Liesgang ring structures, chemical bandings of iron oxides - a wonderful work of natural art.

Shortly we are at the point where Red Hands Gully meets Camp Fire Creek; we cross the latter to continue along the former. Here large moss-encrusted tree trunks lie, one beside the track, another traversing the dry creek bed; forest giants slowly being returned to the soil from which they arose, possibly centuries ago. Grey Myrtles (*Backhousia myrtifolia*) are the dominant trees in the understorey along the creek banks in this sheltered gully.

Small seedpods, reminiscent of flying saucers depicted in early science fiction films, are scattered in profusion along the track in this area. A sure indication that the towering trunks here, with deeply furrowed fibrous bark reaching up to the canopy, are of the Turpentine (*Syncarpia glomulifera*), a tree extensively logged for its durable timber. Tall *Angophoras* also contribute to the canopy here, one amazing example has a red-barked trunk rising from a beautifully flared base; numerous domed burls create a bizarre surreal effect. Below this protective canopy the large boulders lying along the presently dry creek line are draped with moss; ferns clothe the banks - an enchanting green glen. Beside the track there are several large clumps of

Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum aethiopicum*), their tufts of delicate fronds enhancing the scene.

The track now begins to rise out of the gully and a more open drier environment is encountered. The hollowed trunk of an ancient forest giant stands beside the track. In a fire long ago this trunk has created a chimney effect resulting in an intense fire hollowing the trunk, leaving only a thin wall of dry timber. A tall opening has been burnt out on one side of the trunk creating another of Mother Nature's unique sculptures. To stand inside this chimney and look up through the blackness to the circle of open sky is a special experience.

The canopy is far less dense now and large rock outcrops become more numerous, we round one such outcrop and are at the Red Hands Cave.

The rock art here, mainly ochre stencils of hands but also balloon-shaped figures and possibly a throwing stick or woomera, was painted between 500 and 1600 years ago. Europeans first discovered this site in 1913 when a local party was searching for a lost child. Contrasting with the 500 to 1600 year age of the stencils, a mere twenty or so years later the site had been badly vandalised with charcoal graffiti; a revealing reflection on two different cultures. Various protective wire fences and screens were then installed during subsequent years.

Bruce Wright, an ex Curator of Aboriginal Rock Art at the Western Australian Museum, used to walk with our group. Bruce told us on our last visit here that in WA the use of hand stencils was a deeply spiritual act, the person is declaring he belongs to the land in that area. A person would never place his hand stencil in an area in which he did not belong. (Bruce saw no reason why the same culture would not translate to NSW and other parts of Australia.) It is also said that children, during an initiation, would place a stencil of their left hand and return in adulthood to place a stencil of their right hand. There is of course still much debate about the full meanings attached to rock art.

After some time trying to soak up the atmosphere of this special place we move on to a rock outcrop above where we pause for lunch. This was an opportune time and place to attempt to build images in the mind's eye of what daily life would have entailed for those original inhabitants.

Before heading off again I suggest we should keep our eyes peeled for examples of the Woody Pear when we are on the Link Track; this appears to cause some bemusement among the group: Woody Pears, what is he on about? Within a few metres of the start of the Link Track there is a Woody Pear Tree with a large Woody Pear near its apex; oh ye of little faith. This is the *Xylomelum pyriforme*, Xylon = wood, melum = fruit, pyriforme = pear-shaped. Voila! The Woody Pear.

This intriguing small tree has smooth-edged lanceolate mature leaves yet the juvenile foliage is coarsely toothed. It flowers in October-November and the subsequent pear-shaped fruit splits to release two winged seeds, similar in nature to Hakea fruits.

The Link Track takes us across open woodland then drops down into magnificent closed forest as it approaches Camp Fire Creek. We cross the creek and follow close to its bank until we reach a rock platform containing many axe grinding grooves and water wells; interconnecting channels have been cut between some of the wells. These grinding grooves are most commonly found near a source of water, needed for cooling and lubrication. They are however also found on elevated rock outcrops away from any water source and here artificial wells are required. Eugene Stockton, a renowned researcher of Aboriginal lore and custom in the Blue Mountains, suggests this may have been achieved by repeatedly lighting a fire on wetted rock, causing it to exfoliate and form a depression. This is another wonderful link to the Aboriginal history of the area.

Heading back toward the high road we pass a fine example of Zieria, the Sandfly Zieria (*Zieria smithii*) or perhaps the Stinkwood (*Zieria arborescens*), clusters of small ball-

like buds about to burst into four-petalled blossom.

Back at The Causeway the decision is made to return via Jellybean Pool as Libby has never seen this feature. Along the way a group of Pygmy Sundew (*Drosera pygmaea*) is sighted, one carrying a tiny flower bud - exquisite.

At the cars we indulge in the usual cuppa and Freda offers a sugar hit in the form of some jubes, not jellybeans it is true, but close.

John Cardy

### **FAREWELL ELLIS REYNOLDS**

**Ellis, a foundation member of this walking group, left us for a debate with a higher power on the night of Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July.**

**Ellis and his much loved and devoted wife Mary, accompanied by their cherished Scottish Terrier, Clerk Maxwell were among the seventeen who walked to the Tessellated Pavements at Mt Irvine on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1990, the first walk for this Group. The last walk that I can find in our records, which Ellis attended, was in October 1994, again to the Tessellated Pavements; leg problems prevented him from further direct participation.**

**Helen and I first walked with the Group in March 1996 and had the very good fortune to meet Ellis shortly after; a firm friendship quickly developed with both Ellis and Mary.**

**Libby is the only remaining active member who walked with Ellis but many of you 'armchair walkers' would have had that pleasure. Many of you present walkers would have had the pleasure to meet Ellis at various social functions; and it was a real pleasure to spend time with Ellis and Mary. There was always entertaining and informative conversation, punctuated by incisive and often dark humour. I am sure I speak for all our members when I say it was a privilege to know you Ellis. Our thoughts are with you Mary and with your family.**

**Helen and John Cardy for the Group**

## **Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group**

### **OUR AUGUST WALK**

**FRIDAY 15<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2014**

**Gentle Cascades and a Dramatic Waterfall, Sheltered Tracks and Panoramic Views**

**Popes Glen to Evans Lookout at Blackheath**

The group last walked the track between Govetts Leap and Evans Lookout in June 2005 and the Popes Glen Track in February 2009; this is the first time we have combined the two. Popes Glen takes us along a secluded creek line; we are then treated to majestic views along the Cliff Top Track.

**Meet at the Evans Lookout car park at the end of Evans Lookout Road at 9.00am or at Merry Garth for an 8.15am departure. There will be a car shuffle to our starting point near Memorial Park in Prince Edward Street.**

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.**

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### **FUTURE WALKS** (Tentative schedule)

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2014 – Evans Crown at Tarana

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2014 – Grand Canyon at Blackheath

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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> August – Meet at Hay Lane – Ferny Cnr**

**12<sup>th</sup> September – Meet at Hay Lane – Sloan Reserve**

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