
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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LIONS HEAD RIDGE AND LIONS HEAD

TOPIC

OUR APRIL WALK

LIONS HEAD RIDGE and
LIONS HEAD on the KINGS
TABLELAND at
WENTWORTH FALLS

Friday 15th April 2016

Lion. The word alone conjures thoughts of bravery and courage; stemming of course from those very attributes of the king of beasts. Our destination today, viewed from afar, resembles the profile of a prone lion surveying his kingdom in the valley below.

The thirteen walkers who gathered at Wilson Park in Wentworth Falls this morning displayed, perhaps unknowingly, a degree of the bravery and courage of a lion; for yours truly would be leading this walk rather than Libby. It was a new venue for Libby and I had walked this path once previously. With Libby having organised a vehicle rationalisation we set off for Kings Tableland.

As we made our way along Tableland Road we passed the old Queen Victoria Hospital, looking rather forlorn behind a chainwire fence. And what is the history of that establishment I hear you all ask; I shall attempt to elucidate.

Kelso King, (later Sir Kelso), was a Sydney businessman with interests in insurance, banking, pastoralism, mining, coastal shipping, music and theatre. He and his first wife, Irene Rand, purchased a tract of land,



Autumn in the Bush

circa 1890, on Kings Tableland which included part of the Kedumba Walls and stretched into the Kedumba Valley. (Kelso King was not the source of the naming of Kings Tableland, it was named after King George III, though the nominative connection may well have attracted him to the area.) They built a fine house with wide verandahs and French windows; a splendid garden was developed. Irene died in 1900 and Kelso returned to Sydney.

In 1901 King sold his house to the Committee of the Queen

Victoria Diamond Jubilee Homes for Consumptives Fund which had been working, since 1897, toward providing better facilities in the clear fresh mountain air for those suffering from tuberculosis. (Perhaps they should have also been working toward getting a shorter name.) King's grand house became the centrepiece of the Queen Victoria Homes for Consumptives, opened in February 1903 with wards for twenty men. In 1958 it became the Queen Victoria Hospital catering for the aged and chronically ill. The Wentworth Area Health Service took it over in 1988 and it operated as the Queen Victoria Nursing Home until its closure in 1999.

Following that little detour into hospital history we have a little bushwalking history. We continued along Tableland Road to a point near Double Hill; so named, for the two high points on the ridge, by The Warrigals, a

bushwalking group formed in 1936. Here a small indistinct cairn marked the start of an equally indistinct footpad leading up the embankment beside the road; we had arrived at the trackhead for our walk.

The track initially rose rather steeply from the road passing through low open forest. A small shrub beside the track, a Hairpin Banksia (*Banksia spinulosa*), carried a single flower spike, perfectly formed and pristine; a shining beacon in the morning sunlight welcoming us into the bush.

The winding path led us to a crest where we emerged from the forest into heath land; a stone cairn indicated the way to a rock platform where a stupendous panorama opened up. Libby laid out her well preserved forty-four year old Blue Mountains – Burratorang Tourist Map on the platform to assist in identifying the features on show; I have the same map but my copy has become far too fragile to use on a bushwalk.

Off to the left undulating heath stretched into the distance, extending across to end suddenly at the edge of the escarpment of Kedumba Walls. Before us was the immense gulf made up of the Kedumba Valley, Jamison Valley, Pitts Amphitheatre and Cedar Valley. The brooding form of Mount Solitary, or Mummie to give it its Aboriginal name, sat within this gulf. We got a different perspective of the Ruined Castle and Castle Head from this point, and beyond, the line of Narrow Neck Plateau stretched out toward the Wild Dog Mountains with Mount Cloudmaker and Mount Stormbreaker further on toward Kanangra Walls. A magnificent panorama.

Continuing on we dropped down a series of rock ledges where there were several magnificent gnarled examples of the Old Man Banksia (*Banksia serrata*) naturally Bonsai'd by the elements in this exposed position. Surprisingly there were several examples of Port Jackson Cypress (*Callitris rhomboidea*) in this area sending up narrow vertical columns of foliage above the wind-shorn heath in defiance of the elements.

We arrived at a wide rock shelf where two rows of stones had been placed to indicate a pathway; we settled down here for morning tea and to take in the stunning views on offer. Libby sat quietly near one end of the rock shelf but she was not idle, she counted more than one hundred and twenty small birds fly past, perhaps Yellow-faced Honeyeaters heading north for winter. I didn't see a single bird but did manage to notice that the fire tower on Narrow Neck Plateau was visible on the distant skyline.

We then contoured across some rock outcrops and around a small knoll before dropping back down into shoulder-high heath. The vegetation includes, among others, Conesticks (*Petrophile pulchella*) displaying their elongated cones, Dwarf She Oaks (*Allocasuarina nana*) in soft hedge-like forms, Heath Banksias (*Banksia ericifolia*) showing off their deep orange flower spikes; here and there, in more open spaces, there were examples of Cord-rush (*Restio sp*) with their clumps of slender stems. On looking back to the group descending into a small gully the only thing visible was a row of hats bobbing along above the vegetation.

The path then became tunnel-like through taller shrubs with no distant views to be had. After some distance in this enclosed environment Allan Cupitt lamented laconically that the "spectacular views at many points along this walk", as promised in the notice for the walk, were conspicuous by their absence. Only moments later we were at the edge of a sheer cliff where there were views to die for, literally if care was not taken at this spot.

Far below us was the Maxwell's Farm site still containing some of the old farm buildings; it is now the Kedumba Crossing Camping Area. It was the property of William Maxwell (1832 - 1914) grandfather of Les William John Maxwell (1916 - 2000) a plant operator who attained almost legendary status with bushfire fighters in the Blue Mountains for his fire trail construction and other fire mitigation works.

Soon we caught sight of our destination, merely a rounded tree-clad dome from this perspective, one could hardly paint a picture of a lion's head from that. But then, one should take care in speaking of painting the lion, it is old nautical parlance to strip a man naked and smear his body with tar; where on earth did that come from.

We then moved back into an open forest environment. Occasionally Smooth Barked Apples (*Angophora costata*) rose from mats of convoluted shards of discarded bark. The differing shades of amber, cream and pinkish-grey of the trunks and of the mats of bark created exquisite cameos of colour; some of these cameos were enhanced by the twining glossy green tendrils of Old Mans Whiskers or Curly Sedge (*Caustis flexuosa*).

The track took us steeply down into a gully where there was a large cairn which marks the start of an improbable pass into the valley. We then began the final climb to the summit, passed an exposed rock face containing a large overhang cave; there was then deep leaf litter on the track which made the going slippery in places. Soon rock outcrops became more numerous and we arrived at the top of Lions Head; time for a well-earned lunch.

What a spectacular place to dine this was. The cliffs of Kedumba Walls on one side, the open expanse of the Kedumba Valley on the other. The waters of the Coxs River Arm of Lake Burratorang were just visible in the foreground of the view toward the Kanangra Boyd National Park. Below us a clear sandy tract could be seen where Reedy Creek flows into the Kedumba River.

Closer at hand another of Mother Nature's little mysteries was being played out; how do ants so quickly detect that a food source has arrived? Alice was studying these industrious little creatures carrying crumbs many times their own size and soon became rather protective of two groups, ensuring no walking boots landed upon them, especially the really small ones, they were actually difficult to see, perhaps they were infant ants. Someone suggested it would probably be classed as

infANTicide to trample them and as that was such an infANTile suggestion I have no intention of admitting that I was the culprit.

With body replenished by lunch and Libby's bushwalker cake, soul refreshed by the splendour of our surroundings and mind put at ease that no ants had been killed or maimed in this endeavour, we set off to retrace our path back to the vehicles.

Just before we began the final descent to the vehicles the view back toward the Lions Head area revealed the cliff faces glowing in the afternoon sun; a splendid sight.

Having sat atop the Lions Head we felt it appropriate that we seek out a distant view of the formation to see the Lion in profile. We drove back along Tableland Road and turned left into Kedumba Valley Road at the Queen Victoria Hospital; this took us to the locked gate at the top of Kedumba Pass. Adjacent to this gate a short track led us to the edge of the escarpment where breathtaking views into the Kedumba Valley and back along Kedumba Walls were on offer.

In the foreground the line of Kedumba Pass could be seen clinging to the base of the cliff line as it dropped into the valley. And beyond, lying atop the talus slope, was the Lion. Forehead and snout formed by the cliff face, mane created by the tree cover we had climbed through, sway-back dipping then sweeping up to a rounded rump; a Lion indeed surveying his kingdom. A wonderful vista with which to conclude our walk along Lions Head Ridge to Lions Head.

Now to head back to Freda's place where she had kindly invited us for afternoon tea and scones.

What a delightful setting in which to end the day; Freda has created a lovely haven in her backyard since she bought the property a little over two years ago. A neat vegetable garden, a little secret nook below the branches of a large weeping tree; a charming retreat indeed. And what a wonderful table of delights Freda supplied; thank you so much Freda for your hospitality and thoughtfulness.

It was lovely to have Mary Reynolds attend the afternoon tea; to have Mary and Libby, co-founders of this walking group twenty-six years ago, together at a group function was a delight.

Now to see if one can get a lion's share of Freda's scrumptious scones.

John Cardy

NB NB NB NB NB NB NB NB NB NB NB

There will be no June Newsletter published as Helen and I will be away on holidays. Therefore, the meeting arrangements for both the May and June walks are detailed below. Libby of course will be the only contact for these two walks; remember, ring after 7pm. Enjoy the walks, we will be thinking of you (perhaps) and we will see you all in July.

OUR MAY WALK

Friday 20th May 2016

Exhilarating Escarpments, Wonderful Waterfalls, Pleasant Pools and Outstanding Overhangs.

Leura Cascades to Gordon Falls, Pool of Siloam and Lyrebird Dell

The group last visited this venue in July 2009. This is a relatively easy circuit. It follows the Prince Henry Cliff Walk from Leura Cascades to Gordon Falls Reserve, drops down to the Pool of Siloam, then on to Lyrebird Dell where rock overhangs have a history of Aboriginal occupation dating back more than 12,000 years. We then return to Leura Cascades. The full circuit is a little over six kilometres.

Meet at Leura Falls Car Park (upper car park off Cliff Drive) at 9.30 am or at Merry Garth for an 8.30am departure.

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

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 (after 7pm). Please contact as early as possible.

OUR JUNE WALK

Friday 17th June 2016

Sheltered Streams, Craggy Cliffs and Precipitous Panoramas

Popes Glen, Pulpit Rock and Govetts Leap at Blackheath

The group last visited this venue in February 2009. This is a medium grade walk of about 9 kilometres; a wonderful walk which combines a sheltered creek line, open heath and some of the most spectacular views in the mountains. It does include a few ups and downs with a short climb to Govetts Leap to finish.

Meet at 9.30am in Prince Edward Street below the Memorial Park and Pool at Blackheath (near the Caravan Park) or at Merry Garth for an 8.45am departure.

A short car shuffle will be required with some vehicles being left at Govetts Leap Lookout.

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

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 (after 7pm). Please contact as early as possible.

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 15th July 2016 – Newnes: The Ruins Circuit and The Philosophers Walk

Friday 19th August 2016 – Ikara Ridge at Mount Victoria

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.

13th May – meet at Hay Lane

10th June – meet outside Windy Ridge

8th July – meet outside Windy Ridge

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 for details