
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

Volume 27 Issue 2

February 2017

A MOUNT WILSON RAMBLE

TOPIC

OUR JANUARY WALK

A MOUNT WILSON
RAMBLE

Friday 20th January 2017

The story of the January walk has been written by a guest scribe, as indeed will be the case for some months to come; see note later. Here is Barbara Harry's charming account, with a touch of whimsy, of the Mount Wilson Ramble.

Our January walk, a Mt Wilson expedition leading from Merry Garth and concluding at the village sign at the lower side of the zig zag, having explored a collapsed saw mill, a throne, a quarry and the glorious bushland with its fresh damp smell and splendid variety of colours, shapes and landscapes.

Cars were deposited at this sign prior to the walk, ready for our transport at the end.

Following days of temperatures in the mid thirties, this Friday was a most comfortable misty, damp day in the low twenties, almost perfect except for the darkish clouds gathering, gentle rumblings of thunder and yellow tailed black cockatoos squawking a warning.

However, Libby led us through her delicious garden, down down down through the rainforest lushness to the bottom south west



Summer in the Bush

corner. There, it was necessary to fling one leg over a barbed wire fence, thoughtfully padded with towels for our protection, and continue down, tramping through thick leaf litter, surrounded by glistening damp ferns, sassafras and coachwoods till we reached the narrow, shallow Waterfall Creek.

Not far over the creek and now trudging uphill, Libby called a halt so we could drag out our wet weather clobber, as the light darkened and the thunder heralded steady rain. A few umbrellas appeared and it

seemed Ray Nesci's raincoat was still drying from our December walk and somehow had failed to be packed.

We were now on the fairly flat southern fire trails as the rain kept us company as did a few leeches till we reached the ruins of the old saw mill; a collapsed messy heap of old timbers and corrugated iron, slowly being reclaimed by the bush. This may well eventually provide an interesting archaeological excavation.

Off now to the morning tea destination, "The Throne". By branching off and up from a specific junction of fire trails, noted by either a particular tree (which may or may not be there next time, as Libby remarked) or by pacing 60 steps, the spot to turn was denoted. (Good luck to anyone attempting this again.)

To reach the summit of The Throne entailed a steep scramble on hands and knees up a rock

face to be rewarded with 360-degree views with wide swathes of creamish-yellow blossoms of the Sydney Peppermint (*Eucalyptus piperita*) in full flower. Quite magical swatches of colour in the vast grey-green vista.

As for this being the morning tea spot, this proved to be a lie (or fake news as a recently elevated person is prone to declare), as wettish conditions determined we move on to lunch. However Ray was spotted under his umbrella munching on something and drinking from a thermos cup. He does travel a long way and breakfast was early.

Raincoats came off as we headed in an upward direction towards Wynnes Rocks Road. To the left of the path looping majestically was a purpley- orange vine with yellow russet spotted flowers, violin shaped, with botanical name *Cardyonsaii*. To the right, on the same track, was an elegant shrub with dainty plumes of aqua and scarlet globular seedpods ready to burst – *Rainesfolium*. Following these most unusual sightings of never before seen native flora a small diversion allowed a squiz at the Glen Murcutt house. Reactions varied, but Helen C thought it “not quite her cup of tea”.

Wynnes Rocks Lookout is a truly spectacular view, as the valley floor is so deep below, and beyond, Mt Tomah and the full range of mountains along Bells road. This was to be lunch, sitting on the rocks, but grey rolling clouds said “no”; as did Libby. A wise decision as the rain began before we reached the shelter shed 20 paces away. Here we gathered, in the four quadrants of the shed, to enjoy lunch as the rain patted on the roof and a family of magpies entertained us. Perfect.

No rain deterred us as we headed back along the road, a happy band of trekkers, some with bloodstains on their trousers from the little black critters. Helen Freeman, who hasn't walked with us for some time, met us here where lots of welcoming greetings ensued, before we continued to the "new track". This has just been completed by Peter Raines and still bears remnants of freshly slashed foliage. The track follows the northern high side of the

Mt Wilson Road, leading down from where The Avenue begins to the hairpin bend. At the end of the track Libby showed us a recessed area, cut back from the road, with walls of stone that had once been a quarry, stone from here was used in the construction of Dennarque.

From here we crossed Mt Wilson Road to continue down on the alignment of the old road, which Libby and Elizabeth have recently cleared in order to keep it open. This original road has quite a steep incline, which cars found hard to negotiate, hence the new longer one we now use.

And lo, at the bottom, a little cachet of cars was waiting to haul us back up the hill to Merry Garth. A group of 19 walkers had finished, to return home “tired but happy”. My phone showed we had taken 12,325 steps in walking 9.2kms and had climbed 22 floors.

As John might say, another marvellous Mt Wilson walk, ups and downs, rain and fair weather, wonderful company, interesting and new sights but we missed you John, and look forward to your return very soon.

Barbara Harry

Many thanks Barbara for taking us on that happy, genial, sometimes whimsical, jaunt around Mount Wilson with just a little touch of mystique thrown in for good measure. I have searched all my botanical references and cannot find those native plants you mentioned; rare specimens indeed! (John C).

The rainforest and the bushland often do carry an air of mystery, that odd little movement but there is nothing there, a perceived shadow but there is no sun, a ripple on the water from an unseen source, a rustle of leaves yet there is no breeze. On this walk was that slight unexplained sway of the Huon Pine in Merry Garth noticed, the radiating ripples on Waterfall Creek with no apparent cause. Out of the corner of the eye a movement near The Throne, turn the head and it was gone; indeed there is a certain mystique in the bush, perhaps there shall be more on future walks; stay tuned. (JC)

A note from John Cardy

Those on the January walk may well have noticed I was not in my usual position as whip for the group.

2017 has not started well for Helen and myself. I am receiving treatment for prostate cancer, diagnosed last November, which has migrated to my right hip. Though I am now walking normally after initial treatment doctors have advised no bushwalking in case of a fall and possible broken hip.

I have been receiving wonderful treatment; pain in the hip gone completely, and other indicators are good. I am at present undergoing a course of chemotherapy which will take me up to the end of April.

Hope to be back bushwalking and writing the reports in the latter half of the year. In the meantime Libby will be the scribe unless, as was the case this month, others wish to volunteer; please do. Booking procedures and newsletter production and distribution shall remain as normal; chemo side effects allowing.

Regards to all – John Cardy

A Touch of History

The following is a compilation of excerpts, with some modifications, from previous newsletters. They provide some historical background to this walk.

War of course throws up extreme horror, great tragedy and unbearable suffering; it can also provide quirky examples of pure happenstance. One of the venues for the walk today was influenced not by one but by both World Wars. Colonel Richard Owen Wynne, whose grandfather established the Wynstay Estate at Mt Wilson, spent much of his early life in England and served in the British Army during the First World War. A young Yorkshire man, Matthie Davies, served as his batman during that time. Following the war Matthie Davies and his wife Flo came to Australia with Col RO Wynne and his wife Mariamne and worked as butler and cook at Wynstay; they later ran a small guesthouse, Woodstock, in Davies Lane.

Then came the Second World War and Matthie was seconded to work in the Lithgow Arms Factory, a position he did not cherish. Col Wynne managed to get him transferred to work in Syd and Albert Kirk's timber mill at Mt Wilson where timber was milled for the manufacture of rifle butts and stocks for the war effort. Matthie Davies used to walk from his home in Davies Lane through what is now the Merry Garth gardens and down through the rainforest to the timber mill.

So WWI brought Matthie Davies into contact with Col Wynne and ultimately to Mount Wilson; WWII saw him working at the timber mill and establishing what became known as Matthies Track. Happenstance indeed!

The route followed today down through the rainforest below Merry Garth was along Matthies Track.

Libby has fond early childhood memories of Matthie emerging from the rainforest with his lamp and giving a cheery wave as he made his way past the tiny cottage her parents rented in these grounds at that time.

Syd and Albert Kirk's mill, which is now being swallowed by the bush, was in production before 1922 and operated until 1967. Originally steam driven, water was piped from a small dam above the falls on Waterfall Creek. It is said that an early resident of the mount, of a slightly eccentric wont, found this dam quite a pleasant pond in which to bathe and perform ablutions. Those at the mill were less than pleased with this activity, for as well as the water being used for the boiler and other production purposes, they used it for drinking and tea making. Puts a whole new slant on a cup of tea with plenty of body. Apparently Syd was not at all impressed and made his feelings very plain.

Syd's wife Elizabeth (Lizzie) had been author Patrick White's nanny for many years during his childhood at Mt Wilson and both she and Syd maintained close links with Patrick during their lives. Patrick White spoke fondly of Syd teaching him to understand and to appreciate the beauty and complexity of the bush. A line

in a childhood poem had him running “Down to the saw-mill in the sassafras”.

The Wyndam Zig Zag, the old access road to Mt Wilson:

Edward Wyndham, of the winemaking family in the Hunter Valley, having been appointed as a temporary surveyor was given the task, in 1868, of sub-dividing land at Mt Wilson. To aid in this project he arranged for the zig zag construction to provide access. To obtain suitable road making material the basalt quarry on the north side of the present zig zag was opened and its site indicates where the hairpin bend in the Wyndham Zig Zag was located. It is still possible to identify sections of the old road bench and embankments; excavated on the high side and built-up on the low side with basalt blocks from the quarry. A visit to the quarry site illustrates the hard work that went into providing access to this area.

The zig and the zag were later extended to provide the more gentle gradient which exists today.

John Cardy

LOST and FOUND

Left behind at the Christmas luncheon was one Blue Chair Bay hat. Not sure if that is a Blue Chair Bay hat or a Blue Chair Bay hat. Contact Libby to retrieve same.

OUR FEBRUARY WALK

Friday 17th February 2017

Magnificent Views Aplenty, Enclosed Rainforest and a ‘Few Stairs’. A Mountain Walk with a Slightly International Flavour

The Giant Stairway, Federal Pass, Katoomba Falls, Scenic World Boardwalk and Furber Steps at Katoomba

This is a spectacular yet challenging walk with a steep descent on the Giant Stairway of 911 steps and an ascent on the Furber Steps track of about the same number, or a few more, steps - a descent and ascent of about 370 metres. That ascent however can be made by riding the Scenic Railway or Cableway if you wish, rather than tackling the Furber Steps,

but be aware the cost of that ride is now \$19 so, as Joe the Gadget Man used to say: “Bring your money with you”. (Showing my age there.)

Meet at the car park in Katoomba Falls Reserve (opposite Katoomba Falls Kiosk and next door to the Caravan Park on Katoomba Falls Road) at 9.30am or at Merry Garth for an 8.30 departure.

Bring morning tea, lunch, 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 0400 444 966. Note **Helen’s new mobile number.**

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative schedule)

Friday 17th March – Glow Worm Tunnel and Pagodas on the Newnes Plateau

Friday 21st April – Lunch Rock and Wollangambe River near Bell

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 February – meet at Wynne Reserve

10th March – meet at Wynne Reserve

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 for details