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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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BORONIA POINT AT MOUNT WILSON

TOPIC

## OUR OCTOBER WALK

**BORONIA POINT at MOUNT  
WILSON**

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2017**

‘Intrepid’ – fearless; undaunted; daring; brave (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary). It was with some degree of intrepidity that seven walkers set off from Merry Garth in very light rain, or was it rather dense mist, for the walk to Boronia Point; Carol Conway moved off perhaps most intrepidly of all. (There you are Carol, three times in the first paragraph.)

The very long dry spell broke in the early hours of the Friday of this walk, causing several intending attendees to choose to be armchair walkers for the day and remain ensconced, dry and snug, indoors.

Libby’s car was deposited at Farrer Road West for she had a medical appointment in the early afternoon, this allowed her to complete at least some of the walk; her love of walking in the bush with the group and her determination is outstanding; an intrepid lady indeed.

As we moved away from Merry Garth a single delicate white flower of an Orange Blossom Orchid (*Sarcochilus falcatus*) was sighted nestled among the fleshy fronds of Rock Felt Fern (*Pyrrhosia rupestris*) sitting high on the



Spring in the Bush

trunk of a tree on the edge of the enchanting pocket of rainforest opposite.

We dropped down the few steps into the rainforest which runs along behind the Campanella Cottage, The Copse, Linden and New Bywood properties; what a delight it was to be in the enclosing atmosphere of this forest in these moist conditions. The moss-encrusted boulders once more a brilliant green among the dark moist leaf litter; fronds of ground ferns bowed gracefully under the weight of moisture and

quivered occasionally when hit by water drops plummeting down from the canopy high above, shedding droplets onto the forest floor. Off to the right the forest drops away steeply toward Waterfall Creek and the tall trees disappeared into the mist; an enchanting start to this walk.

We turned into Stephen Lane and skirted around Tolimount Cottage, Bisley and Bryn Mawr; the manicured exotic plantings in these properties contrasting markedly with the native forest. A group of closely-growing Soft Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) displayed overlapping fronds arching elegantly across each other; a green filigree canopy bejewelled with rain drops, held aloft by stout dark trunks.

Presently we arrived at Cathedral Reserve where we paused for morning tea. Here we were looking down the slope to the group of

conifers selected many years ago by Libby and the late Bill Smart for planting in this somewhat swampy corner of the reserve.

There is a mix of Dawn Redwoods (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) and Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*). What a wonderful legacy they are; their tall conical form a foil against the native trees. In today's conditions their pointed apexes speared into the low hanging mist.

Continuing on we crossed Mount Irvine Road, the black ribbon of asphalt vanishing into a white wall of fog, and entered a citadel that captures you with its stunning beauty; we were in the Cathedral of Ferns.

This area, normally a shady refuge under full sun, today, under heavily overcast skies, was a haven of glorious gloom, a prolonged twilight in which the rainforest took on a magical, mystical, atmosphere. Tree trunks soared, straight and true, above flared buttressed bases to form the dense enclosing canopy. Some trunks carried helical scars, imprints left by long expired and decayed vines which once spiralled skyward in search of the energy of the sun.

Moisture laden ground ferns grew in profusion, adding green and silver decoration to the thick brown carpet of leaf litter. Tree ferns are present in abundance (despite the abhorrent theft of many some years ago). Some grow straight and tall, others lean at crazy angles on the hillside. Still more have succumbed to the force of gravity, their trunks prone upon the ground, their heads turned skyward seeking light; my mind's eye, a mind somewhat spellbound in this mystical place, sees them as some giant life form crawling across the forest floor.

We visit the Giant Tree, an ancient Brown Barrel (*Eucalyptus fastigata*), struck by lightning in 2008 yet still clinging to life; one branch continues to carry live foliage. (After more than fifteen years I can still hear our dear departed enthusiastic bushwalking friend Hans Oberstebrink's unique pronunciation of 'fastigata'.)

We somewhat reluctantly emerged from this fairytale forest and made our way up the hill to follow the route of the powerline. We passed an overhanging shrub which carried, just above head height, a remnant birds nest; a small and beautiful example of the intricate art of weaving.

As we descended rather steeply down toward the small picnic area near the start of the Happy Valley Track we passed another work of art, this time by Mother Nature; a cluster of about seven Soft Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*), fronds curving downward in these wet conditions.

We then made our way along what was an original section of the road to Mt Irvine. This is now known locally as the Tip Road. In the days before a rubbish collection service was available rubbish was dumped over the embankment into the bushland; remnants can still be seen but the bush is slowly reclaiming its territory. This practice was quite common on rural properties in the past; rubbish often simply thrown over the back fence. These heaps then often became rich sources of 'things which might come in handy one day'; that piece of corrugated iron, a coil of wire, jam tins for potting up plants, etc; an early form of recycling, little is new under the sun.

On the high side of this road a rock embankment is decorated with a plethora of Rock Sprengelia (*Sprengelia monticola*) displaying dense clusters of brilliant white five-petalled flowers. Also present here were several examples of Dragons Tail (*Dracophyllum secundum*) carrying their one sided stems of pinkish bell shaped flowers. Several minuscule waterfalls dropped down this rock face forming tiny pools of white foam at the base of the dark rocks. A stark contrast between this display of the beauty of nature and the detritus of man just across the road.

As we continued downhill the slightly heavier rain was forming Lilliputian rivulets on the track. They dropped over diminutive cascades into pools, forming rafts of white foam before continuing on, burbling and purling over stone

ledges and across flat slabs before spilling off the track to irrigate the parched vegetation in the bushland.

We then emerged back onto Mount Irvine Road near the intersection with Farrer Road West; here our numbers increased to eight as we met Judy Tribe who had walked down the hill from her place to join us on this section of the walk.

We swung onto the Boronia Point Trail which led us across the boundary of the Blue Mountains National Park for the first time today. As the track approached a small sheltered gully we encountered a wonderful stand of Rough Tree Ferns (*Cyathea australis*), their crowns of fronds, held high on relatively slender trunks, appeared to glow in the subdued light. Waratahs (*Telopea speciosissima*) lit up the bush here, first single blooms, then pairs and clusters of these beautiful scarlet globes which indeed are 'seen from afar' as their botanical name implies.

It was about here that our number again became seven as Libby decided to bid us farewell and return to her car for the trip back in order to keep her appointment; it was great to have your company for that much of the walk Libby.

The trail then led us into more open woodland where the effects of the October 2013 fires are still evident. The new growth on the trunks of many rough-barked eucalypts stands out against the charred black bark; the understorey shrubs are still regenerating among the skeletal remains of those that did not survive the fire; dark hollows are burnt into the bases of many trees, but the cycle of fire and regrowth of the Australian bush continues.

Soon we arrived at the end of the ridge and were overlooking the magnificent gorges of the Wollangambe River. Though buffeted by rather strong wind we spent some time taking in the grandeur of the scene. The snaking river contained by sheer sandstone cliffs; walls of grey, ochre and gold defining its sinuous path. On the cliff edge Mother Nature had been at work creating sandstone sculptures with contorted ironstone ledges, roofs and

protrusions; and yes indeed there were boronias on the point, not in great numbers and looking a little bedraggled in the rain, but just beginning to flower.

Having taken our fill of the spectacular views over the Wollangambe we moved back up from the cliff edge to a more sheltered spot for a fill of a different kind; we paused here for lunch.

Our appetites sated we began the return walk to Merry Garth, essentially retracing our outward path. Our number reduced to six back at Farrer Road West where we farewelled Judy and continued on our way.

Before leaving us, Libby had invited us to have our after walk cuppa on the veranda at Merry Garth, and to have a wander around the grounds of that 'Blessed Enclosure', an offer we gladly accepted.

What a wonderful way to end this walk, the conditions were a little challenging at times but the rewards were many. This little group of intrepid walkers experienced the mystique of the rainforest shrouded in mist, the open woodland shimmering and alive in the wet, the grandeur of the Wollangambe River gorges and the Merry Garth garden clothed in its Spring attire, lustrous and glistening in the misty rain. What more could one ask.

John Cardy

## OUR NOVEMBER WALK

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2017

**Open Forest and Heathlands, a Prominent Rock Formation with Expansive Views and the Upper Reaches of the Wollangambe**

**Lunch Rock and Wollangambe River near Bell**

The group last visited this venue in May 2013. This is an easy to medium walk of about 10km on a combination of fire trails and mostly good tracks, though somewhat overgrown in places, through overarching understorey and enclosing heath. The 360 degree views from atop Lunch Rock are impressive.

**Meet at 10.00am at the Bell Railway Station on the Sandham Road side of the line or at Merry Garth at 9.30am for a 9.40am 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.**

**FUTURE WALKS** (Tentative schedule)

Friday 15 December 2017 – Knight-Brown Fire Trail at Mt Irvine, then our **Christmas / end of year luncheon**

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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.**

**10<sup>th</sup> November – Meet in Hay Lane**

**8<sup>th</sup> December – Meet at Wynne Reserve**

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