
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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THE RAMPARTS AT MOUNT IRVINE

TOPIC

OUR DECEMBER WALK

**KNIGHT-BROWN
FIRETRAIL, THE
RAMPARTS and
KOOKOOTONGA
FIRETRAIL at MT IRVINE**

Friday 15th December 2017

Here we are at the end of another year, a rather traumatic year for Libby and yours truly, but let us put that behind us for we still managed to have many good walks, in some rather interesting weather conditions it is true, yet that serves to make the walks all the more memorable. Sit back then as we review our walks for the year and once again look at some events which occurred on the same day throughout history; some significant, others perhaps not so, in fact some decidedly not so.

Our first walk of the year, a walk I was unable to attend, was on 20th January; a Mount Wilson Ramble led by Libby and described by Barbara Harry. It took the group down through the magnificent rainforest below Merry Garth where rope-like lianas hang from the forest giants. This brings to mind the first of the past events; it was on this day in 1984 that Tarzan sadly fell off his vine when Johnny Weissmuller died. Another feature encountered on this walk was The Throne, which elicits thoughts of another past event. It was on this day in 1966 that Prime Minister



Summer in the Bush

Sir Robert Menzies retired. He had rather a fervent fondness for another throne in another place. Who could forget his sycophantic words to Queen Elizabeth II: 'I did but see her passing by and yet I love her till I die.' He also had a much sharper tongue. The target of much heckling at public political meetings (what ever happened to them?) a woman once shouted, 'I wouldn't vote for you if you were the Archangel Gabriel,' his instant riposte was 'If I were the Archangel Gabriel madam, I'm afraid you would not be in my

constituency.' Also visited on this walk were the ruins of Syd and Albert Kirk's timber mill, Wynnes Rocks Lookout, the old quarry site beside the present zig zag and the original Wyndham Zig Zag.

Our next two planned walks were cancelled because of Libby's and my ongoing treatment.

On the 17th February we had planned to walk the Giant Stairway, Federal Pass and Furber Steps. It was on this day in 1883 that the first vacant / engaged sign for use in public toilets was patented; an event of some significance I'm sure you would agree. One wonders, with some trepidation, what actor and comedian Barry Humphries, who was born on this day in 1934, would make of that coincident event. His could perhaps be regarded as a multiple birth of sorts with his alter egos Dame Edna Everidge, Sir Les Patterson and others.

The Glow Worm Tunnel and Pagodas on Newnes Plateau had been our planned walk for the 17th March. Gottlieb Daimler was born on this day in 1834; he patented a high-speed internal combustion engine in 1885 and founded the Daimler Automobile Company in 1890. I am not suggesting any connection to the above events but the first rubber bands made from vulcanized rubber were patented in 1845. It was also on this day in 1912 that Lawrence Oates, a team member on Scott's ill-fated South Pole expedition, left the tent saying, 'I am just going outside, I may be some time.' He was.

On the 21st April 1918 German flying ace, Baron Manfred von Richtofen, the Red Baron, was shot down over France and died. The Royal Flying Corps pilots respected his skill even though he had shot down 80 of their planes in two years. They retrieved his body and buried him with full military honours. That sort of humanity and respect does not seem to exist today. In 1838, on this day, John Muir was born, a man I greatly respect and admire. He emigrated from Scotland to the USA where he became an ardent supporter of national parks and wilderness; he lobbied hard and fought constantly for their preservation. With many thanks to Karin Kirkpatrick and Freda Moxom the group managed to get back into our beautiful national park on 21st April; Karin led us to Hat Hill, along Bald Head Ridge to Bald Head at Blackheath; Freda took up my usual position of whip. I tagged along thinking I would last only part of the journey, but with a lot of help, managed to complete the full walk. Things which come to mind about this walk, apart from my obvious loss of fitness, were the expansive views from atop Hat Hill and the windblown heath along Bald Head Ridge. And then the astounding views into the Upper Grose Gorge including the front-on view of Hanging Rock, the sunbathed cliffs below Burrarakoko Head and the Grose River wending its way along the bottom of the deep vee formed by the talus slopes.

On the 19th May 1962 Marilyn Monroe famously sang 'Happy Birthday' to US president John F Kennedy at a fundraising

event at Madison Square Gardens New York. Coincidentally, it was on this same day 32 years later, that Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis died. Halley's Comet made its return on this day in 1910 after 75 years; to the excitement of some but to the fear of many who thought it signalled the end of the world. When we met on 19th May on Mt Hay Road for our planned walk on Fortress Ridge the fog was so thick one could have been excused for thinking this was the end of the world; then the rains came. We decided to change the venue and to walk from the Leura Cascades to the Pool of Siloam where more shelter was to be had. With Libby still unavailable I led this walk and Des Barrett took up the position of whip. Things which stick in the mind from this walk include the waters of Leura Cascades spilling down the rock terraces from a mist filled gully. Also the opaque wall of white at Olympian Rock and other lookouts along the way, the beauty of the Pool of Siloam in these misty conditions and the stone steps disappearing into mist-shrouded trees as they rose toward the Golf Links Lookout.

The first helicopter flight in the USA was made on 16th June 1922 by Henry Berliner in Maryland. In 1948 on this day the first skyjacking occurred when a Cathay Pacific seaplane was taken over. Keeping with the 'flight' theme, on this day in 1959 George Reeves, famous for his role as Superman, died. No, it was not kryptonite – he shot himself. The group took flight for Mt Irvine on 16th June for our walk to the Tessellated Pavements; once more I was able to lead and Allan Cupitt acted as whip. Memories from this walk include the clusters of multi-coloured bracket fungi on fallen tree trunks laying across the track, the golden blossom of Sunshine Wattle pervading the bush, and of course the intriguing patterns and shallow rock pools on the pavements. Most significantly on this walk, long time walker Robert Chesney invited the group back to his property, Sage Cottage, for afternoon tea where he announced he was hanging up his boots; except perhaps for the occasional walk in the future. Robert had walked regularly with the group for more than eighteen years.

21st July saw the group walk the Pulpit Rock Track from Pulpit Rock to Cripps Lookout and return. On this day in 1987, US television personality Mary Hart insured her 37 year old legs for \$1 million with Lloyds of London; not quite sure what she thought might happen to them; that is certainly one of those historical events that was not so significant. Perhaps I should have insured my right hip as I damaged ligaments while 'bush bashing' on a National Parks Association walk, thus precluding me from taking part in this walk. Karin Kirkpatrick kindly stepped in to lead the walk as Libby was not sure how far she would be able to go and Des Barrett acted as whip; Freda Moxom shepherded Libby along the track to ensure she stayed safe. Gleaned from Barbara Harry's breezy account some of the highlights were the spectacular panoramas on offer from the various viewing platforms at Pulpit Rock, the leaves of the forest canopy far below shimmering in the sunlight and, on the return trip, the western sun lighting up the sandstone cliffs opposite. The real highlight however was the fact that Libby was able to complete the entire walk.

In 1826, on 18th August, Scottish explorer Alexander Gordon Laing was the first European to reach Timbuktu. For his troubles the natives killed him soon afterwards. For our next walk, on 18th August, the natives were a lot friendlier and the temperature was far less than would be experienced in Timbuktu. We ventured to the Lost City on the Newnes Plateau and were greeted by strong biting winds, sleet and snow. Libby was back as leader and I resumed my usual position as whip. Highlights of course included the vast array of magnificent pagodas which make up the Lost City, sighting a few blossoms on the Wolgan or Mallee Snow Gums and seeing flurries of snow in the bush. Exhilarating.

Our next walk was on 15th September. On this day in 1877, Crazy Horse, the Sioux chief died. He was a leader in the victory at Little Big Horn; a rather hollow victory as it turned out. In 1938 a meeting took place on this day between British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler to negotiate a

compromise over German expansionism in Europe. What could possibly go wrong? Coincidentally, on this day with historical connections to battles and warfare, we walked to Fortress Rock Lookout, Fortress Ridge and Fortress Hill north of Leura. The weather gods once again were having an influence on our walk; the wind was strong enough to literally blow you off your feet. Images from this walk include the spectacle of the sheer sandstone cliffs of Carne Wall viewed from Fortress Rock Lookout, views to Lockley Pylon and the ragged cliffs below, and the magnificent expanse of Griffith Taylor Wall illuminated by the afternoon sun.

A rather significant event occurred on 20th October 1973, the official opening of the Sydney Opera House. On our walk from Merry Garth to Boronia Point on 20th October we were treated to a veritable symphony of magical sights in the misty rain. From a minute Orange Blossom Orchid high on a tree trunk opposite Merry Garth, the Cathedral of Ferns bathed in mist which added a mystical atmosphere to this very special place, a rock embankment on the Tip Road emblazoned with the pure white flowers of Rock Sprengelia to the majesty of the deep gorge carved by the Wollangambe River; vivid memories from this walk imprinted on the mind.

On 17th November 1869 the Suez Canal was officially opened. The imperial yacht L'Aigle undertook the first voyage down the canal, followed by a flotilla of forty ships. A flotilla would have come in handy on our 17th November walk to Lunch Rock and the Wollangambe; a part of the track, which follows a dry creek bed, was turned into a torrent by a sudden downpour. Memories from this walk include the hail which accompanied that downpour, the crimson globes of the many Waratahs present - true beacons of the bush, and the masses of bright yellow Drumstick flowers intermingled with hot pink flowers of the Matchheads.

And so we come to our last walk for the year on 15th December. On this day in 1964 Canada adopted the maple leaf as the symbol for their

national flag, what a success that has been; if only we could have the consensus to change our ----- aw, forget it. On this day in 2001 the Leaning Tower of Pisa was reopened to the public after a £15 million stabilisation operation lasting ten years. I came to realise how much I have been leaning on Libby over the years as she has always organised vehicle rationalisations and car shuffles required for our walks; today that duty fell to me, almost had a nervous breakdown! We did however manage to successfully deposit 25 walkers at the end of Mount Irvine Road along with two cars, and the remaining cars at our finishing point on Bowens Creek Road with only a couple of minor hiccups; whew! We set off through the gate at the end of Mt Irvine Road in perfect walking conditions; a pleasant change from some of our walks of late. We swung onto the Knight-Brown Firetrail which leads us in a southerly direction on the eastern side of the Mt Irvine village. This section of the firetrail leads us through open forest which contains Brown Barrels (*Eucalyptus fastigata*), Blue Mountains Ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*) and some outstanding Smooth-barked Apples (*Angophora costata*); the understorey is very sparse, still recovering from the October 2013 fires.

Soon the trail dips down into a more shaded lush area where mosses enhance the trackside embankments and Soft Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) thrive; we have reached Humpy Creek. This creek is so named as in 1898 two of the three original settlers of Mt Irvine, Basil Knight-Brown and Harold Morley, built a humpy here from turpentine bark as temporary accommodation as they cleared their land. The third original settler was Charles Scrivener, son of surveyor Charles Robert Scrivener; the three young men had all been students at Hawkesbury Agricultural College.

Soon we arrive at a large leaning tree on the left of the trail which carries the strap-shaped leaves of a Snake Flower (*Cymbidium suave*) in a recess on its trunk. At the base of this tree is a small cairn built by Libby and Beth indicating the start of a ridgeline route to The

Ramparts; a route which they searched out a couple of months ago in lieu of the creek line track we had used previously. That creek line track had been established and maintained by the late Bruce and Sue Gailey, previous owners of the nearby property Circadia; both Bruce and Sue were on the inaugural walk of this group on 17th May 1990. Libby had taken me along this new route a few weeks ago as she knew it was unlikely she would be able to be on this walk. There is no cleared track along this ridgeline but I reassure the group by letting them know I had been along it once and hoped that I could remember the route.

We set off past an *Angophora* with smooth grey bark stained with streaks of red sap flowing down from the sloping incisions left by feeding Sugar Gliders; nearby there was another *Angophora* of totally different form, its trunk covered with large knobbly protrusions.

Here the bush is dotted with the brilliant pink flowers of the Grass Leaf Trigger Plant (*Stylidium graminifolium*); flower heads sit atop long slender stems rising from tufts of grass-like leaves, thus their common name and indeed their species name. We wend our way through the bush and come across a couple of large drifts of Flannel Flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*); their large starbursts of velvety green-tipped pure white bracts light up the understorey. We cross a small rock shelf, duck under and around some gnarled contorted Old Man Banksias (*Banksia serrata*), a few very old Banksia Men hide among the foliage. Then on a larger rock shelf a couple of *Angophoras* have spread their roots across the surface; they have moulded themselves so tightly to the rock they appear as if they were melted and poured onto the surface.

Soon we emerge onto a sloping rock outcrop on the edge of a gully and continue on to where the rock rises in a mound and comes to an abrupt end; we have arrived at The Ramparts.

This rock outcrop which consists of a smooth elongated hump of weathered sandstone with vertical longitudinal fins of ironstone always

puts me in mind of the back of a dinosaur rising out of the ground; perhaps just another bizarre perspective produced by my somewhat weird mind.

Everyone finds a suitable spot to settle down for morning tea while taking in the expansive views on offer. Across Painui Gully, which is immediately in front of us, the eye is drawn to the serpentine form of Bowens Creek Road as it descends toward Bowens Creek Bridge and reappears as it snakes its way up the opposite side of the creek toward Bells Line of Road. The view farther afield reveals the almost horizontal line of the ridge along which Bells Line runs. The grey/green of the pervading eucalypt forest is interspersed with the light green foliage of pockets of rainforest in the deeper more sheltered gullies. Closer at hand there is a dry rock pool on the formation displaying axe grinding grooves, indicating the original inhabitants of this land appreciated the splendour of this high eyrie.

Time now to make our way back to the firetrail; much to my surprise, and satisfaction, we emerge back at the stone cairn beside the tree. A little further along, on the high side of the firetrail, we encounter a rather beautiful piece of landscape. The tall straight trunks of trees, devoid of low branches and blackened by the bushfire, march up the slope; there is a total lack of any understorey, just a scattered light green ground cover. It is amazing how the devastation of a wild fire can leave the legacy of such an exquisite scene.

Soon we drop once again into rainforest as we approach Painui Gully; groups of Soft Tree Ferns dominate the area. Above the fern and moss embellished creek banks hangs the pendulous nest of a Yellow-throated Scrubwren; unusually this elongated nest appears to have two entrances, one above the other; high-rise comes to the scrubwren's world perhaps?

We continue on and emerge onto Mount Irvine Road at the tennis courts; a short walk along the road brings us to the Kookootonga Firetrail, named after the Scrivener property opposite. (As far as I could determine the

name comes from the Maori for 'south wind'. Other pioneer property names appear to have Maori origins. Basil Knight-Brown, who was a New Zealander, named his property 'Painui' meaning 'good enough' and Charles Robert Scrivener's retirement property 'Taihoa' meaning 'hold on, no hurry'.)

On this firetrail we are walking on a deep carpet of leaf litter through beautiful overarching rainforest vegetation. We pass a Soft Tree Fern with its more mature fronds weeping gracefully below a full set of new fronds pointing skyward. Soon the rainforest diminishes and we are walking in tall open forest before we emerge onto Bowens Creek Road for a short walk back to the cars. The two cars at the end of Mount Irvine Road are retrieved and we make our way back to the village hall at Mt Wilson for our Christmas / end of year luncheon.

Here our numbers swell to thirty-five when we are joined by some non and ex walkers to celebrate the year in the festive atmosphere of the hall; decorated beautifully by the very talented Helen Cardy.

It was really good to have Libby and Beth join us for lunch; Libby had managed to have her appointment for her last ray treatment moved to an earlier time to make that possible and Beth transported her posthaste from Penrith to the hall.

And so, with plenty of good food, provided partly from group funds and also by group members; prepared and laid out by Helen C and Merren Dargan while we were walking, and with lots of good cheer, we wound up yet another year of activities for the group. The twenty-seventh year of wonderful, memorable walks.

Perhaps it is appropriate to conclude with two quotes from the long repertoire of quotes about nature from that great man, John Muir.

"In every walk with Nature one receives far more than one seeks."

And

"Going to the mountains is going home."

John Cardy

OUR JANUARY WALK**Friday 19th January 2018****Open Forest and Heathlands, Views across the Wollangambe and beyond.****A Grand Lookout and the Sunday Afternoon Spur at Mount Wilson**

We will visit a lookout the group has not been to since December 1996; we last visited the Sunday Walk Spur in January 2006. This circular walk will comprise some village walking, open woodlands, heath and enclosed forest.

Meet at Merry Garth at 9.00am for a 9.15 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 16th February 2018 – To be advised

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.

12th January – Meet in Wynne Reserve**9th February – Meet at Wynne Reserve**

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 for details