
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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VARIOUS WALKS AT MT PIDDINGTON

TOPIC

OUR FEBRUARY WALK

BORONIA and HOURN
POINTS, MYSTERY HOLES,
WITCHES GLEN and CAVES
near MOUNT PIDDINGTON

Friday 21st February 2020

Only nine walkers gathered at Mt Piddington for this walk; but numbers do not necessarily remain constant, more on that later. We welcomed back Monica Hayes who had not been able to join us for some time.

It was an overcast hazy day providing ideal conditions for this late summer walk. This was a walk of several parts and we set off along the firetrail which follows the ridge running south from Mt Piddington; shortly we turned left to follow the track to Boronia Point. What a delight it was to experience a little water running down the path, and to see the surrounding vegetation looking so much more alive following the recent rains which ended the horrendous dry period. There was a trifecta of Banksias along this track; Old Man (*serrata*), Hairpin (*spinulosa*) and Heath (*ericifolia*). And of course there were many Boronias, none flowering at this time.

Soon we arrived at Boronia Point and decided this would be an ideal spot to pause for morning tea. Here there were views across Fairy Bower Creek to the richly sculptured



Autumn in the Bush

cliffs opposite and to the Air Navigation Facility on Mount Boyce. Conical Rock was visible near the cliff edge below this facility. Helen handed around slices of the Libby Bushwalker Cake which, initially, she was not too happy with while cooking it; yet she worked her magic and the result was delicious.

After taking in the views from this delightful spot we returned to the firetrail and turned left to head to Hourn Point. Here I suggested that each person pick up a small rock and carry it with them. This was not to add

a little ballast to help work off morning tea; the purpose would be revealed later.

The trail led us through low exposed heath land past Blue Mountains Mallee Ash (*Eucalyptus stricta*) but soon we were in open woodland where Hard-leaved Scribbly Gums (*Eucalyptus sclerophylla*) were abundant. One such tree, on the left of the track, had a cluster of six trunks, which radiated skyward to a sparse canopy. I suggested the group take particular note of this tree for it would be of some importance later.

Not far past this tree we bid hello to a group of three ladies walking in the opposite direction, more on them later.

Soon the reason for carrying the small stones became apparent. There before us were two cairns; one on each side of the track. To the left was a cairn perhaps a little over two

metres in height while to the right was a smaller cairn maybe half a metre high. It is said that rock climbers who frequent this area began a custom many years ago of adding a rock to the larger cairn each time they passed. Someone had obviously decided the large cairn was big enough and started building the companion cairn. We decided our goolie gifts would be added to the smaller cairn to help it grow. Perhaps one day, if the tradition persists, and the supply of nearby rocks does not peter out, it will become as large as or bigger than its companion.

The track then dropped slightly, curved, levelled once more and we had arrived at Hourn Point. The signage still declares it is Hornes Point but it is named after Frederick Hourn who was stationmaster at Mt Victoria from 1904 until 1915. The spelling is correct on the third edition of the Mount Wilson Topo and other more recent maps but the sign makers have not yet caught up.

We made our way to the large rock platform on the point and it was immediately obvious that the rock climbing / abseiling tradition was still in full swing for the platform was crisscrossed with ropes, and encouraging voices and nervous laughter could be heard from below.

We carefully picked our way over the ropes to take up vantage points, which allowed us to enjoy the magnificent vistas on offer.

Stretched out below us were the now lush green pastures of the Kanimbla Valley dotted with agricultural dams, all brimful. The glassy surface of these dams reflected images of the surrounding trees. Farmhouses could be seen tucked snugly into the shade of the trees bordering the pastures and access roads meandered across the valley floor; an idyllic bucolic scene.

Further afield, partly shrouded in the haze, were the hulking form of Mount Blackheath and Shipley Plateau; the conical silhouettes of Sugarloaf Peak and a second unnamed sugarloaf stood just off Shipley Plateau. To the west were the sheer columnar cliffs above Rienits Pass and below Pulpit Rock; these

cliffs house the Bushrangers Cave off the Little Zig Zag. After stashing away the panoramic scene before us into the memory bank for future recall we made our way back along the firetrail and returned to the six-trunked tree.

The significance of this tree is that it marks the point at which to leave the opposite side of the firetrail and follow a very indistinct footpad into the bush for about one hundred metres in search of the 'Mystery Holes'. Care must be taken when looking for these holes for they are not fenced; indeed there is no warning that you are approaching either of them.

We reached the southern-most pit which was almost full of water at this time; then made our way approximately fifty metres north to the second pit which was also full of water. Despite extensive research by local historians neither the age nor the purpose of these pits has been determined. They are very well constructed with dimensions about 2.1 metres by 2.6 metres and up to 6 metres deep.

There are five more of these 'convict pits' in the Blackheath area. Although they are commonly referred to as convict pits there is no definitive evidence justifying that name.

The Blackheath pits are close to the route of Coxs Road giving rise to the convict connection; either during its original construction in 1814 or later maintenance and upgrading work during the 1830s and 1840s by convict labour. However, these two pits near Hourn Point south of Mt Piddington, far away from any early road construction add to the mystery of their origins. There are another two pits south of Medlow Bath and one near Knapsack Bridge at Lapstone. The pits that I have seen are all very well constructed with clean-cut vertical sides and the remains of substantial timber beams installed, one on each side, near the surface.

Suggested uses for the pits include convict accommodation, convict punishment, food storage, water storage, meat storage, gunpowder storage; none of these have been proven, some have been dismissed. Their

existence remains a mystery, and perhaps it is not a bad thing to have a little mystery in life.

We emerged back onto the firetrail at the six-trunked tree and made our way back to Mount Piddington. (This mount was named for William Richman Piddington, a politician who served in the New South Wales Parliament in the mid to late 1800s; he owned property in Mt Victoria.) It was decided this would be an ideal place to pause for lunch while taking in the distant views. From where I was sitting I noticed a grey rock prominence among the trees on the opposite side of the Witches Glen area; could that be Pulpit Rock? A view through the zoom lens confirmed that to be the case.

Following lunch Bruce Dawkins decided to call it a day; his duties however were not yet over, one never knows what you can get involved in on our walks. He was handed a Bonsai by Ray Nesci to return to his neighbour Allan Cuppit; Ray had done some maintenance work on the little Ficus for Allan.

Now reduced to eight walkers we set off to head for Witches Glen. This track drops down through dry sandstone territory initially but soon enters a moister environment. We arrived at Black Cave, the first of several we would see on this loop walk; a damp silt-floored overhang, the remains of a seat sit forlornly nearby. At this cave we again met the three ladies we saw earlier near Hourn Point; they were heading back up from whence we had come. When we mentioned we were doing a loop walk back to Mount Piddington they asked if they could join us. We had no hesitation in agreeing; we picked up Anne Rodrigues as a stray on a walk near Terrace Falls at Hazelbrook and she has been a very regular walker with us for many years since. So, with our numbers having grown to eleven, we continued toward Witches Glen.

This is a lovely enclosed area with mossy banks, ferns and lichens beside the little stream which burbles on and leaps over the cliff as Witches Glen Waterfall. We climbed up to visit Sundeck Cave.

This large overhang curves around the nose of a ridge, the western side is rather exposed and affords nice views into the valley while the eastern side is more protected and overlooks Witches Glen. Rock climbers use this cave. There is a well built fireplace, rock ledges are stocked with provisions and utensils; there were a couple of mattresses stored here when we visited.

We continued on toward Wilsons Glen past several interesting rock walls and across two small ephemeral streams, the track then dropped more steeply into a gully where the track met a tee junction. To the left was Wilsons Glen, we turned right to go to Ross Cave.

Someone commented that this was leech territory. Monica mentioned that on a recent trip to the rainforests of Far North Queensland their guide recommended applying plain old soap to the feet and ankles to ward off leeches. It worked! Over several days she found only one leech in her boot and that had a decidedly peed off look about it. Mark commented the leeches he found in his boots were inevitably bloated and always looked rather satisfied. (Any bloated leeches I find in my boots are invariably dead; what does that say about my blood?)

With my mind struggling to picture satisfied and dissatisfied looking leeches we continued up the hill toward Ross Cave. Soon we arrived at an arched cave open at both ends; it was formed by a huge tor leaning against a rock face. Next was a larger cave sometimes mistaken for Ross Cave, subsequently it was named Pseudo Ross Cave or is sometimes referred to as Not Ross Cave. This cave has a wide low entrance and a domed ceiling.

About seventy metres higher up the hill we arrived at Ross Cave. This large cave in the base of a high sandstone outcrop has an arched entry and a large side window; there is a large column of light-coloured sandstone between the main entry and the window. This is an impressive edifice. It was possibly named after Edward Ross Fairfax, often referred to as

Ross, whose family purchased land in this area in 1876.

We continued up the hill passing a mat of Prostrate or Mountain Geebung (*Persoonia chamaepitys*), its bright light green foliage illuminating the trackside. We reached a tee intersection and turned right to head toward Carlisle Parade. From that point, I assured the group, it was just a short stroll down to the cars. There was some rumbling of discontent when it was realised there was a little uphill section of road before the final descent. Indeed it may be true that I did not mention this minor elevation in the road but one must remember the creed of all bushwalk leaders and guides. Distances and degrees of difficulty are always very fluid; the objective is always just over the next rise or around the next bend and almost always downhill.

And so, at the bottom of the downhill section of Mt Piddington Road, we arrived back at the cars. This walk of many parts combined into a very enjoyable, and indeed interesting, exploration of the area, a walk partly shared with three very pleasant ladies who obviously had a passion for walking in these mountains; another great day in the bush.

John Cardy

OUR MARCH WALK

FRIDAY 20th March 2020

Options for walks in the mountains are still somewhat limited due to the unprecedented fires; I have managed to find another one for March.

Sheltered Forest and Numerous Waterfalls

Waterfall Walks on the South Side of Lawson and Hazelbrook

The group last walked some of these tracks in June 2011. We will explore the creeks and gullies south of Lawson and Hazelbrook linked by a ridge top fire trail through open woodland. Come along and be pleasantly surprised by the beauty of this area.

Meet at the small parking bay in Honour Avenue (opposite Livingstone Street) in

Lawson at 9.30am, the walk will start and finish here.

Those wishing to car share from Mt Wilson should meet at St Georges Church for an 8.30am departure.

Bring morning tea, lunch and plenty of water.

Contact Helen and John Cardy on 9871 3661 or on mobile 0400 444 966.

FUTURE WALKS (Very Tentative Schedule. Venues will depend upon the opening of Council and National Park Tracks)

Friday 24th April – Mount Banks and Banks Wall. **(Please note this is the fourth Friday; Helen and I will be attending our son's wedding on the third Friday.)**

Friday 15th May – Tessellated Pavements at Mount Irvine **(Thirtieth anniversary of the founding of this Group)**

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.

Friday 13th March – Hay Lane

Friday 10th April – Good Friday; No Bush Care

Friday 8th May – Hay Lane

Mt Wilson contact Alice Simpson 0414 425 511 or 4756 2110

Council contact Tracy Abbas 0428 777 141