
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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CORONAVIRUS ISSUE 1

TOPIC

OUR CANCELLED APRIL WALK

MOUNT BANKS and BANKS
WALL

Friday 24th April 2020

This walk was transferred from the third to the fourth Friday in April due to Helen's and my son's wedding being planned for the third Friday. As things turned out both the walk and the wedding had to be postponed because of the coronavirus restrictions.

As stated last month we will continue to issue a newsletter to stay in touch until we are free of this dreaded COVID-19.

My thought is to delve into the archives and to dust off some of the history of the Group; there will probably be some reduction in the length of these newsletters, we shall see how they pan out. So here goes, hope you enjoy some glimpses into the past.

Walk No 26 held on 14th August 1992 was the Group's second visit to Mt Banks and Banks Wall. The reports of walks back then were rather brief.

For this walk there was a note, handwritten by Mary Reynolds, listing the attendees: "Sandra Milne, Arthur Delbridge, Kath Turner, Anne McGowan, Libby Raines and Mary Reynolds." And a few handwritten lines:



Autumn not in the Bush

"Howling westerly gale blowing – sun shining, weather deterred our usual supporters. Bitterly cold. Followed track to top of Mt Banks – then via the fire trail."

Then a typewritten missive, again by Mary: "A few intrepid souls ventured onto Mt Banks on Friday 14 August. We were pushed up the Mountain by a howling gale. Later in the day, we were grateful for the protection from the wind that we enjoyed on the S.E. side.

However the views of the Grose R at 'Banks Walls' compensated totally for the

temporary discomfort of the biting winds."

Short and sweet, but you certainly get a feeling of what the day was like.

Now, jump forward six years to walk No 113 on 19th June 1998; the group's fifth visit to Mt Banks and Banks Walls. 'Our Swamp Wallaby' made its fourth appearance as the logo on this newsletter. The report of this walk was written by Libby; I swear you can hear Libby's voice lifting off the page as you read, so sit back and enjoy our postponed April walk vicariously with Libby as she leads us over Mt Banks and to Banks Walls.

"As the day dawned a thick white frost carpeted the ground sparkling in the sunshine; mist hung low in the valleys of Bowens Creek. Above the sea of white, the top of Mt Banks stood alone almost like a large blue island.

By the time we set off from Merry Garth the mist was rising from the valleys, and although still cold, we all knew that a glorious mild winter's day was ahead. It was our Group's fifth visit to Mt Banks.

Twenty-one met at the foot of Mt Banks which now loomed above us. We set off on our upward path in high spirits. While passing the George Caley Memorial we thought of him and his fellow explorers who in 1804 struggled to this mountain from Mt Tomah through the maze of deep dark canyons of Thunder Gorge and eventually found a way through, camping the night in "Dismal Dingle" between Mt Tomah and Mt Bell. Caley was probably the first European to climb Mt Banks and gaze into the awesome valley that constitutes the Upper Grose Gorge.

Soon we had passed through the low scrub and onto the more open heath country of the 'shoulders' of the Mountain where the spectacular views unfolded around us. The great wall of cliffs surrounding the Grose Valley glowed in the sun, while far away we could observe the protrusion of Hanging or Split Rock, casting a triangular shadow on the cliffs and beside it the vast high cliff of Balzers Lookout where many of us stood on that warm day last March. To the north and east were Mt Wilson, El Southee Hill, Mt Bell and Mt Tomah, all rising before us, misty blue in the winter light.

The air was very still as we watched a small bird of prey above us, hanging motionless in the unseen current, just occasionally flapping its outstretched wings. The low heath plants were growing well after the '94 bushfires when the entire area was completely burnt out on that first terrible day of the fires. A visit to this lovely area is recommended in the Spring and Summer when the flowering plants create a magical natural rock garden.

The soft velvety grey foliage of the Flannel Flowers, *Actinotus helianthi*, large clumps of the Mountain Devil or Honey Flower *Lambertia formosa*, the Drumsticks, *Isopogon anenthifolius* with its lovely pink new growth and the tiny white bell flowers of the *Epacris*

microphylla were all growing in profusion. There was, unexpectedly, a lovely small bush of dark pink *Boronia ledifolia* flowering in a warm sheltered corner with many other low growing shrubs, too many to mention, all thriving in the poor soil amongst the rocks. On the more level areas there was much soft grass. This could explain why bullock teams from Mt Wilson were rested here in the early days after 1875.

As we ascended the vegetation changed as the soil improved; trees grew taller and near the top we came to the basalt soil where *Indigo australis* grew over a metre high; young Sydney Golden Wattle *Acacia longifolia* were covered in large soft buds and there were masses of *Senecio linearifolius*, with a few yellow daisy flowers. A few *Sassafras* were sprouting again after the fires and young Blackwoods were growing quickly from seed.

We settled happily on the many large basalt boulders on the top of the mountain for morning tea, listening to a lyrebird clucking repeatedly in the bush below us as we enjoyed Rosemarie's home made German chocolate as a surprise treat.

Much refreshed after our rest we set off down through the tall bracken to the old road which is well overgrown now, and then onto the fire trail which winds around the base of Mt Banks and proceeds to Mt Caley. The first section of the fire trail had been rebuilt and graded since our last visit; there were many different types of vegetation to observe. Out on the ridges the low heath grew, while beside the mountain where the cliffs towered above, there were delightful shady amphitheatres where the ground was moist; many soft green ferns grew on the banks or clung to the interesting rock formations above. All the vegetation was lush in these sheltered corners; tall Slender Rice-flowers *Pimelea linifolia* with its white flower heads, *Leptospermum* or Tea Tree its branches carrying many round, brown seed capsules; a few large *Melaleucas* burnt after the fires but sprouting from the trunk. Hans found a large clump of the Oak-leaved Daisy-bush *Olearia quercifolia*.

As we rounded the last of the back humps of Mt Banks, we were out in the open heath country again. This time we were above the cliffs of the Grose Valley. Here we spread out in the sun, quietly content with the tree filled valley and its winding rivers overlooked by glowing cliffs below us and the clear blue sky all about us. We could see many destinations of previous walks from this open windswept headland. After lunch we walked along a little track to see the sheer cliffs of Mt Banks high above us and below us. This cliff face is the "Grand Daddy of all cliffs" in the Blue Mountains. It is the highest total cliff, although broken by ledges. For climbers it is about 10 abseils of up to 50 metres. The face of the cliff was first climbed in 1952.

Regrettably erosion and vegetation destruction caused by the abseiling since then, has forced the National Parks and Wildlife Service in 1996 to remove all anchorages and the area has been closed to climbers.

The return walk to the cars along the fire trail was not difficult. The cup of tea and birthday cake were most welcome! A wonderful way to end such a happy day.

(Libby's contribution with many thanks, Mary.)"

So there you are, two descriptions of what was our planned walk for April, each under very different weather conditions. A stark example of how reports of our walks have changed over the years. I hope you all were uplifted as I was on re-reading Libby's report; she hasn't really left us.

Incidentally, the birthday cake mentioned was to celebrate Libby's 57th birthday which occurred five days before that Mt Banks walk. Speaking of anniversaries, the 15th May will be the 30th anniversary of the founding of this Group. In the next newsletter I will include the note that was circulated to sow the seed which grew into 30 years of wonderful bushwalking experiences for so many people, also the report of that first Tessellated Pavement walk, and a little more of the history of the Group.

John Cardy

ALL WALKS IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE HAVE BEEN CANCELLED.

The coronavirus restrictions on unnecessary travel, social distancing and we older ones being asked to remain at home except for food shopping and essential medical reasons means there will be no walks until such time as these restrictions are lifted, and that is anyone's guess. At least three months and there is every possibility it will be more.

In the meantime I will continue issuing the monthly newsletter, delving into the archives to reveal some of the history of the Group.

So, remain bunkered down, remain safe and try not to go stir crazy as we all partake as armchair walkers.

FUTURE WALKS (Tentative Schedule for when the all clear is given)

Mount Banks and Banks Wall.

Tessellated Pavements at Mount Irvine

Waterfall Circuit north of Lawson

Coxs and Lockyers Roads at Mt Victoria

Ikara Ridge and Ikara Head near Mt Victoria

Kanangra Walls

BUSH CARE

BECAUSE OF COVID-19, BUSH CARE HAS ALSO BEEN CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

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