
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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CORONAVIRUS ISSUE 3

TOPIC

OUR CANCELLED JUNE WALK

OUR THIRD CANCELLED
WALK DUE TO COVID-19.
NO VENUE HAD BEEN SET.

Friday 19th June 2020

For this, the third, and hopefully the final, coronavirus issue of this newsletter, I have once more delved into the archives. With the greatest humility I thought it was perhaps appropriate to reproduce my first contribution to these bushwalking newsletters in December 1998 and then, 17½ years later, Libby's last contribution.

So here is my first description of a walk, introduced by Mary Reynolds with the following: "This is John's first contribution. We hope very much that it will be one of many in the future."

FRIDAY 11 TH DECEMBER 1998

**THE HAPPY VALLEY TRACK, MT
WILSON**

A group of 27 gathered at Merry Garth for our afternoon Christmas Walk. The mild temperature was a pleasant contrast with the hot and humid conditions Helen and I had left behind in Sydney some two hours earlier. The distant rumble of thunder and building storm clouds deterred no one.



Winter in the Bush

We followed the track through the rainforest behind Campanella and Linden past what must be the 'grand daddy' of all *Banksia* trees. I find this section of rainforest enchanting and could quite happily spend the afternoon here soaking up the atmosphere and "recharging the batteries". However I need the exercise and they assure me that the Happy Valley is even more beautiful. The leisurely stroll past Tolimont Cottage and Bisley to the picnic area provided us with the opportunity to catch up with members we hadn't seen for

some time and discuss the various activities we have all been involved with over the last few months, an additional pleasurable aspect of these walks.

From the Cathedral Picnic Area we took the short deviation to the Giant Tree, where the linking of hands around the trunk resulted in it being declared an 8 and a half person tree following a protest that the nine people involved weren't really stretching enough! We then proceeded down the Mt Irvine Rd in what must be described (viewed from my position at the rear of the group) as Brown's cow fashion to the Happy Valley Picnic Area where Bruce Gailey joined us. Here we settled down to a rather long and leisurely afternoon tea. (So much for the calories burnt off up to this point.)

With some walkers electing to leave packs in Bruce's vehicle, we proceeded along the

Happy Valley track. Very quickly we were in the midst of the rainforest, rather open at first but soon the canopy became dense. Not far from the road the track forks. Libby explained that the right-hand track leads down to a small creek; this being the Water Track. The left-hand track leads to Happy Valley.

Not too distant past the fork the descent into the valley begins in earnest with the track zig-zagging down the steep slope. Here was very dense rainforest; a magical area with huge rocks draped in moss, secret little fern gardens hiding under rock overhangs and wonderfully buttressed tree trunks with moss covered roots snaking their way into the forest floor in search of nourishment and a secure anchorage. This zig-zagging section is the part so remarkably restored by Peter Raines. It is a truly wonderful achievement and it was much appreciated by this group especially during the climb back out.

As we descended further into the valley there was inevitably an increase in moisture in the forest with small beads of water glistening on the moss banks and ferns and other foliage releasing mini showers as we brushed against them. Soon the captivating, soothing sound of running water was apparent as we approached the creek and a very noticeable and welcome drop in temperature occurred. It was very wet underfoot and quite slippery but everyone made it safely onto the small area of the creek bank.

What a delightful spot this is. Water running over a bed of pebbles, pooling momentarily and then reforming into a narrow stream before dropping over a rock ledge into a larger pool, then to flow out of sight around the next curve. All this framed by the magnificently steep, forested walls of this Happy Valley.

Some of the more (fool?) hardy members of the group crossed the narrow stream, sidled along small rock shelf, dropping down to the pool below the small waterfall. The view of the pool and the waterfall from this lower level was beautiful. The abundance of green moss, the stillness of the pool reflecting the lush vegetation and the narrow, single drop

waterfall combined with the smooth water-worn pebbles evoked for me the serene feeling of a formal Japanese garden while the scents and the sounds surrounding us were quintessentially those of the Australian bush. What an enchanting peaceful place.

After spending some time trying to soak up and store away for future use as much as possible of this unique atmosphere, we surrendered to that rule of bushwalking in the Blue Mountains --- what goes down must come up and reluctantly commenced the ascent. Every stop produced something beautiful to observe. Then it was on to Merry Garth for the Happy Christmas Barbecue where another 12 members and friends joined us. We welcomed Helen McInnes, a friend of Patricia Andren.

So ended another year of bushwalks --- fantastic varied venues; smooth as clockwork organisation; entertaining and informative newsletters; Libby's bushwalking cake and most important of all great company! What more could one wish for!

This did of course turn out to be the first of many walks I described over subsequent years.

Mary made a rather prescient forecast regarding my future offerings when she introduced my second effort for the February 1999 walk, she wrote; "*this walk is described below by John Cardy who, I forecast, will be a frequent and popular contributor to this newsletter.*" Since this first effort I have had the pleasure of writing two hundred and twenty three contributions.

POPES GLEN, HORSESHOE FALLS, PULPIT ROCK and GOVETTS LEAP at BLACKHEATH

Friday 17th June 2016

In Helen's and my absence on holidays during the May and June walks of 2016, Libby has written charming reports, in her inimitable style, which capture the essence of each of those walks; here is her second offering.

Sadly, this became Libby's last report.

It was a grey day as eight of us met near the duck ponds at the Blackheath Memorial Park. It was good to have Jenny, a friend of Barbara Harry, with us once again and after leaving two cars at Govetts Leap we set off down Popes Glen. This area was one of the first Bushcare sites on the mountains and the restoration work here is magnificent; a great result after so many hours of hard work by the volunteers who have worked, and still work here.

The path at first is quite high on the edge of the glen; we could look down and see a green swathe of the pouched coral fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*) which covers the ground here. A few massive eucalyptus trees had fallen, roots and all, in the big windstorm of 2011; they lay on the ground as stark reminders of the power of the wind.

Eventually the path wound its way down to the Popes Glen Creek. Very old and tall tea trees (*Leptospermum Sp*) grow there in amongst the very thick carpet of vegetation made up of ferns *Blechnaceae*, *Doodia*, *Polystichum* and *Gleichenia*. The trees, mostly the Blue Mountains ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*) were very scattered, so the area had a very open feel.

We followed the clear flowing creek, crossing three small wooden bridges en route until we came to Boyds Beach where we enjoyed our morning tea. Here the creek waters cascade over the low rock ledges and fall into a shallow fern-edged pool with sandy banks.

The track then wound down past some tall rocky outcrops to another lovely sandy-bottomed pool, before we came to a junction in the track. Here we crossed the creek on large rocks, climbed up some stone steps cut into the rock face and we were on a ledge overlooking the Horseshoe Falls and the Grose Valley.

What a contrast this was to the sheltered glen where we had been walking; it was quite breathtaking! A stiff cold wind blew and we looked around at the vast cliffs which surrounded this spectacular view. Ahead were the great sheer cliffs of Fortress Ridge and the

Lockley Pylon ridge, with Mount Hay standing tall behind; nearer on our right Evans Head and then the cascading ribbon of Govetts Leap Falls. Below us the Popes Glen Creek fell over the cliffs forming the Horseshoe Falls and in the protected, moist, shady environment far below the rainforest trees formed a patchwork of different shades of green. On our left the cliffs formed an arc and we could marvel at them and all the strips of vegetation which were growing on the narrow ledges.

Up a very rocky rough track to Cripps Lookout where again we admired the great cliffs and the beautiful Horseshoe Falls which we could see better from this vantage point.

The track then wound around the top of the cliffs, sometimes coming to a cliff edge and then around into sheltered gullies. Beside the track grew many hairpin banksias (*Banksia spinulosa*) with their deep orange cones glowing in the soft light. Here were many fuchsia heath (*Epacris longiflora*) with their tiny leaves and lovely long tubular white-tipped red flowers, some hidden in amongst the ferns and other vegetation and others clinging to mossy rocks. The starry white five-petalled flowers of the tea tree (*Leptospermum Sp*) were starting to come out, their simple flowers all looking upwards, and the first flowers of the sunshine wattle (*Acacia terminalus*) stood out, clear yellow against the green vegetation. There were many thickets of black wattle (*Callicoma serratifolia*) their shiny very serrated glossy leaves very distinct and we brushed past great clumps of old mans whiskers or curly sedge (*Caustis flexuosa*) and ferns growing thickly beside the track.

We passed under many rock overhangs, some dry and others dripping with moisture and covered with many plants, mosses and sundews. Some of the rocks were very weatherworn; the ironstone in them making intricate patterns protruding from the softer, worn away sandstone.

Eventually we came to Pulpit Rock. Back in the chilly wind we explored the various rock platforms, down well-made stairs with good handrails. The vertical cliffs were so close,

quite stunning, dark and brooding in the shadows and the view before us was quite magnificent. We could now see the Blue Gum Forest and Junction Rock, destinations of previous big walks and Mount Banks peeping around the corner on our left. We found some sheltered areas beside the path in which to enjoy our lunch before retracing our steps along the top of the cliffs to the Popes Glen Creek and stepping stone crossing.

The day had remained grey with low cloud but occasionally little patches of sunshine broke through the cloud and lit the great orange cliffs and from time to time little circles of the bright green of the trees showed up on the wooded talus slopes. The bell miners persistent calling could be heard in the valley.

We scrambled up the rough track back to Govetts Leap. The National Parks personnel have been severely cut and people retiring have not been replaced so they are very short staffed. It may be years before this small steep section of track is replaced, as they don't have the workforce or money to tend to all their many walking tracks.

We bid farewell to the lovely valley at Govetts Leap, looking fondly across the valley to the distant Pulpit Rock. Yes it was a long walk; Barbara wore out a pair of shoes along the way home! Makeshift repairs were made en route using two long shoelaces which Robert Chesney fortunately had in his pack; Barbara was able to continue on her way, so thank you Robert.

We enjoyed a cup of tea back at the park accompanied by some friendly wood ducks, a pleasant way to end this wonderful day which we had all enjoyed so much. The memories of sheltered gullies, clear streams and great spectacular views will be with us for a long time.

Libby Raines

As events turned out that last sentence by Libby takes on a degree of poignancy.

OUR JULY WALK-Yes we walk again but social distancing will have to be obeyed

FRIDAY 17th JULY 2020

**Sheltered Forest and Numerous Waterfalls
Waterfall Walks on North Side of Lawson**

The group last walked some of these tracks in April 2012. We will explore ridgelines, creeks and gullies north of Lawson. This is a relatively easy and short walk to ease us back into our bushwalks. Come along and be pleasantly surprised by the beauty of this area.

Meet in Lawson at the car park at the end of St Bernards Drive past the Wilson Park Olympic Pool (the last half kilometre or so is unsealed) at 10.00am. Turn off the highway into San Jose Ave at the lights just east of the Lawson Hotel, left at the Tee junction and right at the Wilson Park Olympic Pool sign into St Bernards Drive.

Those wishing to car share from Mt Wilson should meet at St Georges Church for a 9.00am 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.)

Fri 21st August – Mt Banks and Banks Wall

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 10th July – Wynne Reserve, next to Church

Friday 14th August – Silva Plana

Mt Wilson contact Alice Simpson 0414 425 511 or 4756 2110

Council contact Tracy Abbas 0428 777 141