
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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BERGHOFER PASS AND MORE

TOPIC

OUR SEPTEMBER WALK

**BERGHOFER PASS, HENRY
LAWSON WALK and
ENGINEERS CASCADE at
MOUNT VICTORIA**

Friday 18th September 2020

Ponder for a moment, if you will, devoting your life to community service for many years then being ostracised by that very community for reasons totally out of your control. This is just one of the stories woven into the paths we will follow today.

Fifteen walkers gathered at the Lawsons Long Alley trackhead car park on a still, chilly, overcast morning; perfect walking weather.

We made our way across Mt York Road and began the walk down Berghofer Pass. Soon the view into the Hartley Valley opened up, clearer now that the understorey has been obliterated by the recent fires. On reaching a rocky outcrop we paused for morning tea and to take in the panorama laid out below. The ochres and greys of the rugged sandstone cliffs contrasted markedly with the soft green of the pastures on the valley floor; what better place to indulge in a slice of Helen's version of Libby's bushwalker cake.

From this viewpoint we could see the line of Berghofer Pass curving around the base of the cliffs. It was on this curve that the renowned



Spring in the Bush

Blue Mountains photographer Harry Phillips captured the image of the Coo-ee recruitment march of volunteers, who started out from Gilgandra, making their way up the slope on their way to Sydney on 4th November 1915. The thirty who had left Gilgandra had swollen to more than two hundred and sixty by the time they reached Sydney; from Phillips's photo it appears their numbers had risen to about sixty volunteers at this point. Rather ironical that they were using Berghofer Pass, as we will see later.

We continued down the slope and the view into the valley broadened to include the large farm dams fed by Butlers Creek; their tranquil glassy surfaces mirror-like in the pastures. Soon we came to the water trough carved into the stone beside the track. This spring-fed trough served to water stock being driven up the pass, and possibly the odd motor vehicle which had overheated on the climb; a small basin was cut into the rock at a lower level presumably to cater for dogs. Beside this trough is a small bronze plaque inscribed 'IN MEMORY OF CYRIL "BRUCE" PARKER GREAT GRANDSON OF JOHN WILLIAM BERGHOFER 1922 – 2004 HIS CHOSEN RESTING PLACE'.

As we followed the curves of the Pass we could see the magnificent stonework retaining the road platform on the opposite side of the gully and as we approached the switchback

bend in the Pass the high curved stone culvert came into view. These wonderful examples of early road building skills now more visible after the fires have removed the ground cover and undergrowth.

Carved high on the cliff face at this bend is the inscription BERGHOFER PASS; this carving was deliberately defaced during WW1; it was restored by Berghofer's descendants in September 1987.

John William Berghofer came to Australia in 1855; he was just a boy. He later became a naturalised citizen. He worked as manager of a large property in the Kanimbla Valley; the property took on the name of the valley. He purchased the Mount Victoria Inn, built in 1839 at the bottom of Victoria Pass, in 1892. It was said this Inn prospered during the gold digging days as "a coach horse-changing station and great bullock-drivers' camp, where blowing, oaths, and expletives generally were freely scattered about, and old Jamaica swallowed in puncheons." He converted the Inn to use as his private residence, naming it 'Rosenthal' meaning Valley of the Roses from his childhood home in Hessa, Germany.

He was Chairman of the Mount Victoria Progress Association for many years. He was then elected as the first President of the newly established Blaxland Shire Council and was very active in local government affairs.

Victoria Pass, opened in 1832, successfully catered for horse and bullock drawn traffic and driven stock. With the advent of motor vehicles a problem arose. The steepness of this Pass was too much for the early vehicles to handle; the highfalutin owners of these shiny new machines often suffered the indignity of having to get horse teams to tow them up the hill.

This prompted Berghofer to agitate for an alternative road to be built, with better grades, on the western escarpment and Berghofer Pass was opened in 1912; he received high praise for the achievement. The Pass remained the preferred route until the 1920s when motor vehicles became more powerful and the

upgraded Victoria Pass became the favoured route; Berghofer Pass closed in 1934.

The success of his Pass and all his other community work, counted for nothing in 1916 when anti-German sentiment pervaded life in the Blue Mountains. In May of that year he was disqualified as a councillor and his name was removed from the Pass he had fought so hard to get built.

He felt compelled to change the name of his family home from 'Rosenthal' to the anglicised 'Rosedale' and it remains so to this day. His reputation however was restored after the war ended, and rightly so.

We continued on down the slope past beautifully wind eroded cliffs displaying patches of smooth red, orange and gold sandstone interspersed with occasional areas of fine multiple horizontal layers of shale. We passed a vertical line carved into the cliff face which was marked as the boundary line between the Shires of Blue Mountains and Blaxland.

High above us soon was part of the stone viaduct of Mitchell's Victoria Pass. What a tribute to the skills of the convict stonemasons that the Pass, built to accommodate horse drawn vehicles one hundred and eighty eight years ago, today withstands the load of motorised juggernauts unimaginable back in those days.

Beside the road in this area were a couple of examples of the Woolly Pomaderris (*Pomaderris lanigera*) carrying multiple terminal panicles of tiny bright yellow multiple flowers. Also sighted here was a Myrtle Wattle (*Acacia myrtifolia*) with its slightly reddish stems carrying cream flower heads. Near the base of this wattle was a single Silky Purple-flag (*Patersonia sericea*) its deep violet flower contrasting with the wattle blossom. On the opposite side of the road was a clump of Tufted Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia communis*) their bell shaped five-petalled deep blue flowers illuminating the track edge.

Soon we arrived at the chert quarry on the high side of the road. Chert is a sedimentary rock rich in silica. It was valued by Aboriginal people as, when broken, sharp edges are exposed and it was used for cutting and scraping tools and perhaps for spear heads. We white fellows crushed it and used it as a road building material, and indeed it was used in the construction of Berghofer Pass. In Keith Painter's publication (see below) there is a reproduction of a 1911 photo of Berghofer Pass titled 'The Winding White Chert Road'. Also in that publication is a reproduction of a 1924 advertisement for a subdivision in Medlow Bath; one of the selling points put forward was 'beautiful chert roads'.

The lumps of chert scattered here have broken into rather cubic straight-sided shapes; one large piece had an interesting pattern of thin seams running in various directions across its flat face. (Those wishing to learn about chert and its exploitation in the Blue Mountains should access "The Chert Bubble Volumes 1 and 2" by Keith Painter; all you would ever want to know about chert and more.)

Near the quarry was a Purple Twining Pea (*Hardenbergia violacea*) climbing up a host plant. It was carrying a bountiful display of racemes of violet flowers, so bountiful down low that its leaves were almost completely hidden by the shroud of flowers. A single tendril had twined its way to the very top of the host, where to now?

Soon we were at the lower end of the Pass where the view across the verdant pastures to the surrounding cliffs is rather special but the serenity is disturbed by the closeness of the traffic on the highway. We made our way back up to the switch back bend in the Pass where we paused for lunch.

Here a host of Soft Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) clung to the embankment of the road, their brilliant green new fronds lighting up the scene, while a little further down hill tall straight trunks of eucalypts towered up out of the gully which carries Butlers Creek.

As we made our way back up the hill toward the car park Simon was using his refined

powers of pareidolia, finding many outlines of faces, etc in the rocks and tree stumps. He even had me seeing the head and trunk of an elephant on a rock where he saw a human face.

Back at the car park, to complete the historical picture, it is worth noting that Berghofer Pass used to cross the route of Mt York Road. It then followed the line of what is now known as Berghofer Drive to St Georges Parade to re-connect with the Western Road near the present day Mt York Road intersection.

And so ended part one of the walk today. Five members of the group who had other commitments bid us farewell, the remaining ten took the short drive to Kenny Street where we set off on part two.

We followed the track through windblown heath to an impressive rock formation known by some as Henry Lawson Rock, which sits above Henry Lawson Walk. This scooped rock underscores an impressive view across to Sugarloaf Mountain. From this vantage point we could see traffic crossing the viaduct on Victoria Pass in front of the area we had just explored on Berghofer Pass.

Henry Lawson, while visiting his father Peter Larsen who lived in Mount Victoria, apparently gained inspiration for his poetry while walking here; perhaps he sat in this scooped formation and penned a verse or two.

We clambered down to Henry Lawson Walk; a walk which used to extend around the cliff top to a large rock shelf also previously referred to as Henry Lawson Rock, now known as Sunset Rock. A rather odd decision by council in the 1980s to allow the construction of five houses blocked that access.

We made our way along Henry Lawson Walk toward the Engineers Cascade, named possibly for the engineer Frederick Franklin who would have passed this way many times while working on the construction of the nearby Little Zig Zag in the 1870s.

As we approached the Engineers Cascade we passed a large sandstone boulder with an

amazing array of ironstone inclusions sitting above the track. A little further on was a small eucalypt about one and a half metres high whose trunk was contorted into a shape resembling a literati bonsai; Ray Nesci and I spent a little time discussing how we could refine its structure.

To access the Engineers Cascade requires descending a steel ladder and then stone steps, some quite high. My previous visits to this site alerted me that I would easily be able to descend into the cavern but my dicky knee may well have been a problem in climbing back out; I remained at the top of the ladder while the rest of the group went to investigate. While waiting I admired the large group of Dragons Tails (*Dracophyllum secundum*) near the top of the ladder displaying their one sided stems of bell shaped, pink tinted, white tubular flowers. Also nearby was a shrub carrying the tiniest white tubular flowers; I know not what it was.

The Engineers Cascade drops into a pool on the floor of a large cavern and a small stream then carries the water to leap over the edge of the escarpment. It is a lovely area surrounded by overhanging cliffs and there are amazing framed views out into the Kanimbla Valley and beyond. Simon was especially impressed with the rock formations, who knows what images he conjured up in them.

So it was just a short walk retracing our steps back to the cars in Kenny Street to end another really pleasant day exploring just some of the history and beauty of these mountains. Damage from the bushfires and the following torrential rains has severely restricted the choice of available walks, yet today's selection I feel proved to be a very agreeable experience in ideal walking conditions.

John Cardy

OUR OCTOBER WALK

FRIDAY 16th OCTOBER 2020

Cascades, Waterfalls and Creekside Walks

Minnehaha Falls on Yosemite Creek at Katoomba

The group last visited this venue in May 2014. This is a relatively short, easy to medium walk with a steps descent and return ascent of about 90 metres. The views of these falls along the walk and from their base are rather special. For those wanting an additional walk we have the option of driving over to the south side of Katoomba and exploring Reids Plateau and the Round Walk. For this option we would drive to Katoomba Park adjacent to the Katoomba Falls Caravan Park on Katoomba Falls Road (Cliff Drive).

Meet at the Minnehaha Falls Reserve at the end of Minni-Ha-Ha Road, North Katoomba at 10.00am. Those wishing to car share from Mt Wilson meet at St George's 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 20th November – Birdwood Gully then Magdala Creek at Springwood

Fri 4th December – Tessellated Pavements at Mt Irvine followed by our Christmas / belated 30th Anniversary get together at the Mt Wilson Village Hall. **NB: First Friday in December.**

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 9th October – Wynne Reserve, next to Church

Friday 13th November – Queens Avenue, opposite Windy Ridge

Mt Wilson contact Alice Simpson 0414 425 511 or 4756 2110

Council contact Tracy Abbas 0428 777 141