
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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January & February 2021

TESSELLATED PAVEMENTS

OUR DECEMBER WALK

**30 TH ANNIVERSARY
WALK to the TESSELLATED
PAVEMENTS at MT IRVINE**

Friday 4th December 2020

What a year to forget that turned out to be; bushfires, floods, temperature extremes and track closures galore; then Covid-19 raised its ugly head. Forgettable as the year was generally, we managed some memorable walks; a short review follows.

Due to the widespread Blue Mountains National Park closures and previous low attendances in the height of summer, we did not walk in January. In February we explored Boronia and Hourn Points with their spectacular views, and the riddle of the Mystery Holes and Ross Cave near Mount Piddington in Mount Victoria. March took us to the very pleasant cascades of the Waterfall Circuit south of Lawson and Hazelbrook.

The April, May and June walks were cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions.

In July we enjoyed the open woodland and enclosed rainforest environment of Echo Point and the Waterfall Circuit north of Lawson. August saw us battling strong winds and rain squalls on Mt Banks and enjoying clearing skies and fine views at Banks Wall. The historic Berghofer Pass, Henry Lawson Walk



Summer in the Bush

and the Engineers Cascade at Mt Victoria were our destinations for September.

The spectacular Minnehaha Falls in the north and Reids Plateau and the Round Walk in the south of Katoomba were visited on our October walk.

The delightful Madoline Glen, Birdwood Gully and Magdala Creek track in Springwood shaded us from the heat on our November walk. Which, of course, brings us to our **December walk.**

We had intended undertaking this walk in May followed by a celebratory luncheon in the Village Hall to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the formation of this group; Covid-19 put paid to those plans. So, though seven months late, it was too important an event to go unacknowledged; here is the report of that walk and luncheon.

We met at the Village Hall where Helen had prepared a collage of photographs of the first walk held on 17th May 1990. Back then there were 17 walkers and two dogs. Today we had 16 walkers and no dogs.

The 2 dogs in the photographic collage belonged to Libby & Keith and Mary & Ellis. Mary and Ellis's dog was a Scottish Terrier named Clark Maxwell, after the Scottish scientist who formulated the theory of electromagnetic radiation in 1865; Libby and Keith's dog, on the other hand, was called Twinkle, possibly after a little star. In those early walking days they lit a fire and boiled

the billy. I wonder if Libby was baking her now famous bushwalker cake way back then.

After a vehicle rationalisation we set off for Mount Irvine along what has to be one of the prettiest stretches of road in the State. Below overarching rainforest trees and through open woodland where glimpses of distant ridges and valleys are to be had; the rhythmic song of cicadas could be heard for most of our journey.

We parked at the end of Mt Irvine Road below a huge eucalypt. On alighting from our vehicle Ray Nesci's keen eye spotted a couple of cicada sticks; sticks which are feathered by dozens of tiny curls of peeled back bark.

After mating, the female cicada lays its eggs by piercing plant stems or branchlets with its ovipositor (egg-laying spike at the tip of its abdomen) and inserting the eggs into the slits it has made. They hatch into small wingless nymphs which drop to the ground and burrow below the surface. They survive on sap from plant roots for up to 7 years. As they grow over this period they shed their skins several times.

When the nymph reaches full size it digs its way to the surface with its front legs, which are adapted for the job. It then goes through the more familiar process of climbing onto a tree trunk, fence post or any convenient vertical surface where it splits its nymph casing and expands its wings. When the wings have hardened it flies off to find a mate, hopefully before it becomes a succulent meal for a bird.

It was a beautiful day for walking, small puffs of pure white cloud floating across a brilliant blue sky; a gentle breeze tempering the rays of the sun. The track follows the ridge between the Wollangambe River and Bowens Creek. The contour of the ridge is much more evident following the fire of last December; many of the larger trees sporting only epicormic shoots while most of the shrubs have been reduced to skeletal shafts reaching skyward. There are always little gems after the devastation of bushfires, hanging from the spindly form of one fire ravaged shrub were a couple of

clusters of a dozen or more seed pods, charred baubles silhouetted against the azure sky.

We paused for morning tea at a spot which afforded panoramic views across the Wollangambe to the far-reaching ridges of the Blue Mountains and Wollemi National Parks. Michael Ihm distributed slices of Libby's Bushwalker Cake, kindly baked by his wife Beth; thank you Beth, delicious!

We were treated to a large display of the Native Lobelia (*Lobelia dentata*), holding aloft racemes of deep blue flowers; this annual herb flowers more prolifically after fire. (Mother Nature has many compensating habits.) Contrasting with the blue of the Lobelias were the bright pink flowers, held high on slender stems, of numerous Grass Leaf Trigger Plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*). Almost hidden in the sparse regenerating ground cover were a few Slender Violets (*Hybanthus monopetalus*), the conspicuous mauve major petal giving the impression the flowers consist only of a single petal, the two side petals being minute; thus the species name.

We crossed a small saddle where a few Smooth-barked Apple or Red Gums (*Angophora costata*) grew and passed the wind eroded cliff face which once housed a Lyrebird's nest. Soon we diverted to the right to the cliff edge which afforded great views across to Mount Tootie and Little Mount Tootie. Near this spot there was a large swath of Flannel Flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*) displaying their green-tipped pure white velvety bracts. Noted on our return journey, close to this swath in full flower, but in a more sheltered zone, was another large group of Flannel Flower plants, not yet flowering but ready to burst into bloom in the not too distant future.

We made our way back onto the track and soon emerged from the bushland onto the open expanse of the Tessellated Pavements. What an astonishing feature this is; the deeply grooved pattern of the tessellations occasionally carrying shallow pools of water displaying axe grinding grooves in their base;

other depressions are filled with velvety moss beds. And of course there is the intriguing engraving of the female figure; this was obviously an area well favoured by the original inhabitants.

We took group photographs replicating those taken by the original group of walkers thirty years ago, and retraced our steps back to the cars. Along the way we noted a couple of small mats of the Mitre Weed (*Mitrasacme polymorpha*) displaying masses of their tiny four-petalled white flowers. Also sighted were several examples of the Rush-leaf Bloodroot (*Haemodorum corymbosum*) carrying their clusters of black flowers atop stalks about half a metre high.

Back at the Village Hall our numbers grew to twenty-three with the addition of armchair walkers and others who could not make it for the walk. A very pleasing, and unexpected addition to the gathering, was Mary Reynolds, who, along with Libby Raines, originated this Group. Mary has not been too well lately and her daughter Jane, who was visiting, was able to bring her across from Katoomba; marvellous that she could be here for this rather special occasion.

To celebrate this thirtieth anniversary, Helen, my better half, provided a tabletop sized photographic collage which covered the full history of the group. She also made a large collage in the shape of the figure thirty, bordered by tiny lights, and decorated the tables with foliage and battery operated candles; very impressive.

I gave a short talk on the history of the group which is paraphrased as follows:

This year, of course, is the 30 th anniversary of the group, what a wonderful endeavour started by Libby and Mary. For any social group to last thirty years is remarkable.

Helen and I joined the group twenty six years ago and it literally changed our lives. We made many life long friends and spent some amazing times in the Mount Wilson community.

Early on, the Bushwalk Newsletter was a single paragraph; gradually it expanded and Mary and Libby shared writing the reports.

In 1998, twenty-two years ago, Helen dobbed me in to Mary, suggesting I could write an 'occasional' report; Helen is a very good delegator. So I wrote my first report, in December 1998, about Happy Valley. Since then I have written two hundred and twenty eight newsletters; I do hope they have not become boring over that time, if they have take it up with the delegator.

Today's walk was the three hundred and seventy ninth by the group, and over that time, due to Libby and Mary's foresight, literally hundreds of people have been introduced to the wonders of these mountains.

Helen and I became completely enamoured with Mount Wilson and twenty years ago I wrote a lyric poem about the village. Helen, the delegator, suggested I read it on this occasion. I agreed to do that but only on the condition that I read it before the sumptuous Pavlovas were served, thus ensuring that no one would walk out during the reading; one must take precautions.

Several members of the group were kind enough to ask that I include the poem in this newsletter, so a transcription follows; I do hope you enjoy it.

John Cardy

A SEASONAL PLACE

John Cardy

Take the Bells Line of Road

On a cold frosty day

See the pale winter sunlight

Trickle down on Mt Hay

Swirling mists rise and fall

Playing hide and seek pranks

On the majestic stone walls

Of a brooding Mt Banks

Most travellers are rushing

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To places out west
They rush ever onward
Who knows of their quest
So leave the bustle behind
And traverse the five mile
Through dry open forest
And in a short while

At the point in your journey
Where the road zigs and zags
The sign says Mt Wilson
Now there's tree ferns which sag
Under the burden of moisture
From the rain and the mist
Then on up the hill
Where the road takes a twist

Past banks filled with ferns
And mosses so green
On the left is a holding
Which is named after Breen
To the casual visitor
You would not be alone
If you missed the reserve
Which is named after Sloane

The black ribbon then winds
Through a forest of ferns
Leading into a tunnel
Where the skeletal forms
Of sleeping giants clothed
In their simple winter guise
Are occasionally glimpsed
As the soft mists arise

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On through this tunnel
Of trees without leaves
There stands the lych-gate
Lichen draped from its eaves
Beyond this fine portal
Is a sight heaven sent
The church of St George
Built in fibrous cement

And up on the hill
There are walls crenellated
Near the old Turkish Bath
Where steam was generated
Close to Chimney Cottage
Just down from this hill
Spend time to explore
And find it you will

A well trodden path
In its sinuous way
Winds through the rainforest
Where leaf litter lay
Leading on to small grottos
Weeping rocks, a waterfall
And past many fine trees
All straight and so tall

Past an old mill
The road starts to wind
Take the path on the left
And soon you will find
An arboreal titan
In a ferny cathedral
Embracing the soil
Since time immemorial

A tree fern has fallen
 Refuses to die
 Bends its body a little
 To again seek the sky
 Entranced by this place
 You're compelled beyond reason
 To visit again
 When there's a change in the season

Winter fires subside
 In their warm cosy hearths
 Spring's arrival is signalled
 A floral explosion at Merry Garth
 Green hillsides and fields
 Are suddenly transformed
 By a golden eruption
 As the rich soil is warmed

All through the village
 There are cherries found weeping
 Soft leaves emerge
 From the buds where they're sleeping
 The magnolia is blooming
 On the back lawn at Wynstay
 On the court at Nooroo
 Wisteria parasols halt play

Cherry blossoms reach out
 And gently overhang
 Giving an Oriental touch
 At Donna Buang
 Along every lane
 Around every bend
 There are art works created

In the gardens they tend

The colour keeps building
 To a silent crescendo
 Many weeks have now passed
 Spring nears its end – so
 As the blossom fades
 And the new foliage hardens
 Summer approaches
 And away from the gardens

There's a rocky outcrop
 Marked by original dwellers
 And bearing the name
 Of a partly French fella
 The Australian bushland
 Could hardly look finer
 While off to the left
 There's a small hint of China

Toward the horizon
 A rumble is heard
 Striking fear into animal
 Reptile and bird
 As fingers of fire
 Reach down from the sky
 Igniting the bushland
 And fauna will die

When red tongues of flame
 Leap up from the ridges
 The fire starts crowning
 Building fiery bridges
 And when it is over
 The silence – the stillness

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Then nature rebuilds
For the cycle is endless

Down in the valleys
Away from the heat
There are wondrous places
Where walls almost meet
In the deep narrow canyons
The water is cold
For the sun rarely reaches
These mysterious folds

Trees cling to rocks
With roots serpentine
In more open spaces
There are tall turpentine
The narrower canyons
Are cathedrals of green
Illuminated eerily
By a piercing sunbeam

To visit these places
Truly enriches the soul
Their endless creation
Is Mother Nature's role
But care must be taken
For these pleasures can cost
Treat these places lightly
And lives can be lost

Now in the bushland
There's a sight to behold
Waratah and pultenaea
Blood red upon gold
The scent of boronia

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Hangs in the air
Some subtle, some showy
Native flowers everywhere

The gentry of Sydney
Came here to reside
To escape summer heat
Which begins to subside
The leaves of some trees
Not native to here
Begin to change colour
As autumn draws near

The tunnels of green
Change to yellow and gold
The hillsides are dotted
With crimsons so bold
The maples of Bebeah
More red than the gates
In the Nioka gardens
A nyssa radiates

Throughout the village
The trees are now glowing
Swirling carpets of colour
As the wind begins blowing
Up on Smiths Hill
If you look back across
A colourful kaleidoscope
Lindfield Park and Gowan Ross

The autumnal sun
Sits low in the sky
Casting long shadows
Over the vast Wollemi

From Sylvan Close gardens

This vista is gilt edged

Underscored in scarlet

By a tall maple hedge

The colour then fades

Leaves and temperatures fall

Winter approaches

The four seasons have all

Exerted their forces

At nature's own pace

To enhance the rare beauty

Of this Seasonal Place

MOUNT WILSON

A small aside: Freda kindly presented me with a copy of a very entertaining book by David Bader on Haiku, an unrhymed poetic form of seventeen syllables arranged in three lines of five, seven and five syllables developed by Japanese Zen monks in the sixteenth century. The publication gives one hundred examples of classic books reduced to this form in a very amusing way, for example Frankenstein:

A mad scientist

creates a ghastly Monster

who just wants a hug.

My love of Bonsai may indicate I have some unknown Japanese connection in the deep long lost past, but I am most certainly not a monk by any stretch of the imagination. But I couldn't resist attempting to reduce the 1,380-word account of our thirtieth anniversary walk to seventeen syllables in three lines, here goes:

Thirty years of bushwalks

Commenced at the Tessellated Pavements

Celebrated at the Village Hall

Says it all really, and a tremendous saving in paper, but I can't really see it catching on.

As noted in the December newsletter there will be no walk in January, as

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well as being the height of summer, in that week Helen and I have family commitments

OUR FEBRUARY WALK

FRIDAY 19th FEBRUARY 2021

Spectacular Valley and Waterfall Views

Rocket Point Lookout, Undercliff and Overcliff Tracks at Wentworth Falls

The views from this mainly sheltered track and its many lookouts along the way into the Jamison Valley and beyond are spectacular. The various aspects on offer of the magnificent Wentworth Falls are also very special. Freda has invited us back to her lovely home to partake of our lunches. Meet at the Wentworth Falls Picnic Area at the end of Falls Road in Wentworth Falls at 9.30am. Those wishing to car share from Mt Wilson meet at St George's 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

Friday 19th March 2021 – Hat Hill to Anvil Rock and the Wind-eroded Cave at Blackheath

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 8th January – Silva Plana

Friday 12th February – Check calender on the Mt Wilson community website for location

Mt Wilson contact Alice Simpson 0414 425 511 or 4756 2110

Council contact Tracy Abbas 0428 777 141