
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

Volume 31 Issue 5

May 2021

HAT HILL TO ANVIL ROCK LOOKOUT

TOPIC

OUR APRIL WALK

**HAT HILL to the WIND
ERODED CAVE and ANVIL
ROCK at BLACKHEATH**

Friday 16th April 2021

A flattened bell-topper, a hen and chicken or was it a rooster, a very dewy carpet, a very large cake, a vast wall of fabulous tafoni and an item that the bird known as the Buff Pitta would make good use of; all things which touch our walk today. So join us dear reader to see how these disparate subjects unfold on this relatively short but spectacular walk, perhaps one of the most scenic in these mountains.

Thirteen walkers gathered just off the Great Western Highway in Hat Hill Road in perfect walking weather; streaks of thin cloud stretched across a deep blue sky, a light breeze rustled the foliage of the trees in The Gardens parkland adjacent to the road.

We welcomed back Jan Northam who has not been able to join us for some time and her young grandson Lucien.

Here we rationalised the vehicles down to four so as not to commandeer too much of the space at the Hat Hill parking area and set off on the five and a half kilometre drive to the starting point for our walk.

On our arrival our numbers rose to fourteen when we met Freda, who, with Karin, had



Autumn in the Bush

checked out this walk some time ago, many thanks to you both. And a special thankyou to Freda who had done a recheck only a day earlier and offered to lead the walk today.

I have seen Hat Hill described as vaguely resembling a hat or as looking somewhat like a flattened bell-topper, a type of top hat. Try though I have, on numerous occasions I have been here, I fail to see any resemblance to a hat of any kind; perhaps a lack of imagination on my part.

Now, The Rooster on the other hand, is an obvious stone image standing on the skyline with head held back crowing. This formation is also known as Hen and Chicken Rock; I know not why for I see neither hen nor chicken; lack of imagination again perhaps.

So, with that little pareidolia session out of the way we set off; Freda leading, Des bringing up the rear as whip and me in the unusual position of being able to do my own thing.

The climb up to the summit of Hat Hill is via a track which has sections of badly eroded sandstone but soon we are on the crown of the Old Mans Hat, can't get away from the hat metaphor. This local name dates from 1878 and was used by surveyor Henry James Mylne in a letter to the Surveyor General. Mylne marked out a twenty-acre reserve at this site. Here we are 1035 metres above sea level; the highest point on the Blackheath Plateau.

What magnificent vistas are on offer here. The domed shape of Mount Hay rises above the plateau indicating why it was called Round Hill in early years. Then the eye is drawn to the right along the cliff line to The Butterbox, Lockley Pylon and Fortress Hill. Beyond are the distinctive horizontal lines of Flat Top and the jagged profile of The Pinnacles. To the left the vertical drop of Explorers Wall is seen below Edgeworth David Head and the double humps of Mount Banks rise above the Upper Grose Gorge; a grand panorama indeed, but Freda assures us the best is yet to come.

Having taken our fill, if that is possible, of the views on offer from the crown of Hat Hill we descend the other side of this prominence. The landscape stretching out before us is put into scale by the narrow foot track meandering across the heath and leading out toward Bald Head; a walk we did in April 2017 and which we may program again for this year.

We drop down onto a saddle where a footpad leads off to the right; we take this track and begin to descend further. Here we are crossing the face of the hill below a hanging swamp; there is an abundance of seepage emanating from the hanging swamp, which has been replenished by the rains of the last months.

Presently we come across the aforementioned dewy carpet on the high side of the track. A mass of Common Sundews (*Drosera spatulata*) clustered closely together across an area of a few square metres. Their reddish rosettes are covered in hairs that glisten with a sticky fluid which attracts unsuspecting small insects that are trapped by the enfolding hairs and are dissolved into food for these innocent looking plants.

Scattered among the Sundews are examples of another innocently named and genteel looking herb, the Fairy Apron (*Utricularia dichotoma*). This attractive little plant holds aloft a single terminal lilac flower on a fine wiry stem, the lower lip of the flower is quite broad, thus the Fairy Apron common name. These herbs trap their food in a rather intriguing way. Attached to their roots are tiny hollow bladders closed by a trapdoor. The bladders have negative

pressure and when a living organism touches the triggering hairs the trapdoor snaps open and the organism is sucked into the bladder, the trapdoor shuts and the organism is digested.

The natural world is indeed a source of wonder.

Soon we are back down at road level but we remain in the bush environment and begin the gentle climb up onto Anvil Ridge. Here there is only a faint footpad but Freda leads us on through the quite open terrain resulting from the fires of a little over a year ago. We pick our way through the blackened stems of fire ravaged heath plants yet, as is the way of the Australian bush, regeneration has begun with seedlings sprouting from the scorched earth and new growth emerging from trunks and tubers.

The subject of morning tea arises and Freda suggests, rather than pausing now, that we continue on to a spot where there are views to be had; to a knoll that she points out, a knoll which has the form of a giant cake. Now even I can see that resemblance.

Soon we arrive at a low natural sandstone rampart which contains convenient hand and footholds to ease the climb to its top. And wow! Freda promised views; she wasn't misleading us. What a fantastic place to settle down for a combined morning tea and lunch; dare I say 'munch'.

The distant views from here are amazing but the icing on this very large cake is the array of sandstone and ironstone formations surrounding us near at hand. There are large sandstone boulders sporting crinkled ironstone ledges and plates, circular conical terraces crowned with a sloping saucer like arrangement. There was an open topped 'tunnel' with arched sides reminiscent of the petrified bower of a Satin Bowerbird. There was a flat-topped ledge about a metre high with a concave face dissected by vertical ironstone inclusions, giving the impression of a breaking wave; above this wave the humps of Mount Banks could be seen in the distance. A deep eroded cave sat below a humped

ironstone roof which was penetrated by one large and several small skylights and gently curving ironstone ribs rose to a sculptural parapet with ironstone fingers and plates protruding at all angles. What an amazing spot to rest awhile.

Anne Rodrigues distributed her delicious version of Libby's bushwalker cake much to the delight of young Lucien who had been hanging for a piece of cake since Jan told him early on the walk that it was on the menu. Many thanks Anne for baking the cake.

After a leisurely break we continued on to the end of the ridge where there were great views into the Upper Grose Gorge where the gold, grey and ochre cliffs sit above the tree-clad talus slopes.

We scrambled down off the end of the ridge and a sign directed us to the Wind Eroded Cave. Helen and I had visited this site many years ago, probably before we were married, which makes it at least fifty-four years ago, I had forgotten how spectacular it is. A huge wall of orange, buff, cream and white sandstone literally covered in tafoni; elliptical, circular and ellipsoidal cavities of various sizes and depths, interspersed with horizontal layering; truly a sight to behold.

Young Lucien must have been boosted by the bushwalker cake for he scrambled over the many lower ledges with the agility of a mountain goat and climbed into a large hole near the base; oh to be young again. Older members explored the rock face at a more leisurely pace. A little further on there is a separate cave, tall and narrow with very little tafoni; very impressive nonetheless.

We spent some time taking in the beauty and majesty of this feature, known in the 1940s as Sunset Cave, before moving on to the final major attraction on this rather special walk – Anvil Rock.

Anvil Rock was named in 1938 due to the formation looking like a blacksmith's anvil. The Company Secretary of Bradford Kendall Industries, who was an ardent bushwalker, donated an anvil around 1948 which was

installed upon the rock. About 1970 the anvil was pushed over the cliff. Perhaps pure vandalism or perhaps bushwalking purists who felt it was out of place. Two members of the Police Rescue Squad located the anvil below the cliff line in 2005 and it was reinstalled with a new directional plate in 2008.

Now that the anvil is back it would be an ideal location for the Buff Pitta, otherwise known as the Anvil Bird, to take up residence. This bird feeds on land snails and uses stones or exposed tree roots as an anvil to smash open the snail shells. If word gets around of this perfect snail smashing installation the Anvil Birds might migrate a little further south.

The views from Anvil Rock Lookout are outstanding. The sheer cliffs of Banks Wall below Mount Banks, the Grose River coursing its way down the gorge below the talus slopes which were displaying scars of recent land slides. The triangular cliff face below Rigby Hill, the vertical lines on the edges of the cliffs below Walls Lookout. Mount Hay profiled against the wispy clouds and blue sky and the sunlit cliffs peeking above the tree canopy to the south past Lockley Pylon, Fortress Ridge and further; truly a sublime outlook.

For the return to the cars some chose to walk via the road while the rest of the group returned the way we came along Anvil Ridge and then emerged onto the road just before Hat Hill where the group recombined.

Young Lucien, who showed a very keen interest in the plants and rock formations on the outward journey, returned with Jan via the road. Along the way he found, beside the road, a section of tow bar with a large shackle attached in 'as new' condition. He obviously considered it a piece of treasure; though it was quite heavy he wasn't letting it go. I can imagine it taking pride of place as a trophy on his bedside table.

And so we returned to our meeting place at the start of Hat Hill Road after what everyone agreed was a rather special walk. The treasures in these mountains are indeed boundless and never fail to amaze.

John Cardy

OUR MAY WALK**FRIDAY 21st MAY 2021****Open Woodland, Shady Creek Lines and Waterfalls****Transit of Venus Track at Woodford**

The group last walked in this area in August 2015. It is a relatively easy circular walk of about 5km which takes us past three waterfalls.

Meet at the parking bay and information shelter near the end of Woodbury Street at Woodford at 10.00am. Turn off the Great Western Highway into Woodford Avenue, then left into Weroona Avenue and right into Woodbury Street.

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 18th June 2021 – Asgard Swamp and Thor Head

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 14th May – Meet at Silva Plana

Friday 11th June – Meet at Wynne Reserve

Mt Wilson contact Alice Simpson 0414 425 511 or 4756 2110

Council contact Tracy Abbas 0428 777 141