
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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DELTA CORONAVIRUS ISSUE ONE

TOPIC

OUR CANCELLED JULY WALK

MOYA, GLADSTONE,
SUBLIME POINT and GOLF
LINKS LOOKOUTS at LEURA

Friday 23rd July 2021

Well, here we go again, confined to barracks for goodness only knows how long. There will certainly be no walk in August; I wouldn't be surprised if we don't get to walk until October or November. As was the case last year I shall continue to issue a monthly newsletter with glimpses into the history of the Group. In the earlier days of this Group an extra walk, further afield or longer in distance, was held if there was a fifth Friday in the month; both of the following walks fell into that category. The first look back is to the Glow Worm Tunnel walk on 29th March 1996, the first walk Helen and I attended with the Group; described by Libby in which her soft, gentle, passionate love of the mountain bushland shines through.

THE GLOW WORM TUNNEL

“A perfect still sunny autumn morning greeted us on Friday 29th March. Thirty-two gathered at Clarence, an excellent response, for another interesting and rewarding day. Rationalising the transport, we set off along the Newnes Plateau, through the pine forests, then along the old railway line, constructed in 1906 for



the Commonwealth Oil Corporation to provide access to the Wolgan Valley, where shale oil was being mined. The road was rather rough and the dust hovered in the still air, but we were able to marvel at the high embankments and deep cuttings of the rail construction, as well as the mighty cliffs with their many pagoda formations, as we slowly descended the winding track.

Our walk commenced along the railway, then we followed the Pagoda Track through the gap in the cliffs to the Old Coach Road where we enjoyed

morning tea. The majority walked up the old road to see the interesting and spectacular rock formations surrounding us before setting off through the pretty green leaf valley enclosed by the towering golden coloured cliffs, emerging suddenly above the Wolgan Valley. We walked along the side of this valley meeting with the old railway line again.

The ascent following the old railway was gradual and warm in the sun. Thus we lunched in the shade in company with a very large goanna, surveying us sleepily from the safety of a nearby tree. Far below lay the farms of the Wolgan Valley with their grassed and ploughed paddocks and calling cattle; above were the magnificent ochre cliffs, while a grey thrush sang sweetly in the trees. An added pleasure was the diversity of fauna observed; a variety of birds, wallabies and kangaroos in the forest; young Daniel discovered an

Winter not in the Bush

echidna behind a large rock; others watched a small snake move slowly across the track; a lyre bird was seen, while several more were heard singing. The tiny *Helipterium graminus* was admired, growing in a small rock crevice and other interesting plants were found.

Slowly we approached the sound of a stream, the awesome cliffs still sheer above us. Then rounding a corner, we walked into the rainforested gully, refreshingly cool amongst the many tree ferns. The tunnel and the thousands of glow worms were an unforgettable sight. The group stood quietly, entranced by the many little lights on the walls and the roof in the darkness of the tunnel.

It was an excellent moment to admire the toil and fortitude of the men who constructed the road and the railway in such inhospitable, steep, and rocky terrain with no modern machinery and taking only a year and six months to achieve this feat. The dangers and difficulties must have been overwhelming. We can only quietly honour those hard working people and the animals they used with much humility. Now the force and power of water has caused huge washaways in the creek beds and massive rocks to collapse on the old railway. Gradually the vegetation is reclaiming many of the relics of the construction works.

Our return to the cars was slow, but the highlights of that happy day, the intense blue of the sky, the strong smell of the bush, the friendships and experiences we shared will linger in our memories.”

We now move on to 30th July 1999, a longer walk, again described by Libby.

EVANS LOOKOUT, JUNCTION ROCK, GOVETTS LEAP LOOKOUT

“Thirteen looked down into the Grose Valley far below from Evans Lookout where the first two thirds of our walk lay before us. Little puffs of mist still lay in the valley and with the thin cloud cover the valley was a soft deep blue and the surrounding great cliffs muted in colour. It seemed strange retracing our steps down into Greaves Creek so soon after our last

walk there in May yet it was no less beautiful. The straight golden trunks of the *Eucalyptus oreades* in the sheltered gully, the pass through the gap in the rocks to the soft green ferns, the numerous fungi, thick green mosses and the trickling water of the sheltered rain forest gully which led into Greaves Creek. Here we left Hans to walk back up to the cars while we set off down into the depths of the valley.

Beauchamp Falls was once again our morning tea spot on our huge rock beneath the Falls where much water cascaded into the pool below. For a fleeting moment the sun came out, lighting the cliff wall near us. Once again the little rainbow was dancing above the pool.

The path wound between huge moss covered rocks, forming a little grotto beneath the tall coachwood. Then we followed the stream as it tumbled down between the rocks, over little falls and cascaded over wide ledges. It was a beautiful stream with a mass of water spilling over the steep slope while we carefully descended many stone steps.

I often think of the people who made these walking tracks so many years ago. This track from the Beauchamp Falls to Junction Rock was opened in 1900 after being built by contractor, John Cliff for the cost of £270. Somehow the track builders found an easy way down through the cliffs where it seemed impossible to go. Many of the steps we used were made with very large flat rocks and had been in place for many years, trodden by hundreds of feet over time. These hard workers left a fine legacy of miles of wonderful walking tracks all through the mountains.

We crossed a wide flat area where upstream there was a lovely scene of water cascading gently over a series of ledges. Then the track wound down through patches of rainforest, leading into more open forest of turpentine with their thick furrowed bark and large straight trunks, *Melaleucas* with their curious flaky paper like bark and the tall straight blue grey trunks of the occasional Blue Gum or *Eucalyptus deanei*.

After the junction with Govetts Creek (which commences at Leura) the valley opened out and was much less steep. Beneath the open tree canopy beautiful Sydney Wattle, *Acacia longiflora* was in flower, a glorious sight, lighting up the bush with its bright yellow flowers and filling the air with its soft scent. The creek was different too, wider and slower in pace gliding over many smooth rocks of all colours and sizes and then forming deep sandy bottomed pools. Sometimes the path was close to the stream, at other times it led up above the stream so that we could look down on this serene and peaceful scene, while the great orange cliffs of the valley sides towered above us.

Junction Rock is where Govetts Creek joins the Govetts Leap Brook. These combined waters then make their way through the valley to the Blue Gum Forest where they join the Grose River, flowing down to meet the Nepean at Yarramundi. We lunched here settling comfortably on the large rocks. Up stream there was a large still pool where a yabbie was seen in the clear water and downstream a magnificent large ledge of rock could be seen beside the stream.

We set off up the Govetts Leap Brook for the long ascent out of the valley, firstly through open Sclerophyll forest which, as the valley became steeper and more narrow, changed to a rainforest canopy. We crossed and re-crossed the little stream, enjoying its pools and rapids, the smaller pools and the delightful little flat clearings on its banks. The steps were many and we took it very slowly. As we neared the end of the valley many little streams joined the main stream. We seemed to be surrounded by little streams, each making its own way as it fell over the rocks.

Strangely, although we saw much scattered leaf litter where they had been scratching, we did not see a lyre bird all day but there were many small birds twittering in the trees. We were able to catch a glimpse of some and recognise the calls of honeyeaters, scrub wrens, little tits, whip birds, currawongs, rosellas, wattle birds and the little swifts flying freely near the cliffs.

A long steep climb up the ridge brought us to the bottom of the Govetts Leap Falls, where the brook falls 527 feet (159 metres) onto the rocks at the base of the sheer cliff. They are wonderfully beautiful falls as the cliffs form a gentle curve and are covered with thick vegetation of sun and water loving plants. We stopped for a drink and refreshment before setting out for the final part of the walk up the cliff face.

In May 1898 Tom Williams and his son Isin from Blackheath began making this incredible track down the cliff face. It must have been impossibly difficult and hair raising as they chipped their way down. At the most dramatic point the track passes through a hole in the cliff which is negotiated by a ladder.

Apparently much of the work was performed by Tom Williams suspended over the cliff by a rope. Tom and his son must have worked rapidly for by January 1899 the track was complete with its steps, wire rope and protective netting. Total cost was £140!! £60 of the £140 was given by the Department of Works; the rest was donated by local people organised by Tomas Rodriguez.

Back to our little group 100 years later slowly making our way up this spectacular track. We marvelled at the path and the view of the Grose in the late afternoon light and the unbelievable cliff wall beside us. The falls were in the distant curve while the mass of low growing water and sun loving plants grew in profusion from the dripping rocks. We stopped often to catch our breath and to absorb the beauty of it all. As a farewell gesture the sun came out, lighting the cliffs on the far side of the valley with a radiant soft orange hue.

Mary (Reynolds) was there to meet us at the top. She had actually walked down some of the way. We found a roomy shelter shed out of the wind for afternoon tea where we celebrated my birthday with cakes by Helen Freeman and Mary. Thank you so much."

Mary wrote the following footnote to Libby's walk description; the "sorrow of the past months" referred to the passing of Bill Smart

on 14 July 1999. Bill was a loyal and dedicated member of this Group.

Nature is a gentle healer of the spirit and she did much to sooth the sorrow of the past months on that beautiful walk; there will be some aching legs and tired muscles which will fade, but the memories of that happy day and the long walk, so full of surprises and scenes will linger long.

A special thank you to Libby for that clear, precise and moving account. I am extremely sorry that I did not undertake the walk. M.R.

There you have it, two walk notes by Libby from 22 and 25 years ago; great memories.

Libby's walk notes transcribed by John Cardy

Member News – Ray Nesci

An update on Ray's recovery which unfortunately suffered a set back in mid June; following is a message sent by his son Clinton to the School of Bonsai on 22 July.

“Unfortunately Dad had a seizure about 4 weeks ago. Fortunately there was no more brain damage or bleeding on the brain.

Still very scary at the time as we didn't know if he was having another stroke. He spent 4 nights in hospital and he wasn't allowed any visitors. It was very tough for him.

He is now on a small dose of anti seizure medication to try and prevent any further seizures. It really knocked his confidence around because he was doing really well up until then. He has been sleeping a lot more since this happened but I suppose it's the brain's way of healing. He got up at 10am a few mornings ago. Never thought I'd see Dad sleep in like that ever, but he's nearly 80 so I guess he was well overdue for a sleep in.

Feel free to pass on this information to anyone who asks you. It is not private. Can't wait for the lockdown to end so we can see everyone again. Business has been dead. Regards. Clinton.”

All your bushwalking friends' thoughts and best wishes are with you Ray; stay strong.

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**OUR SEPTEMBER? OCTOBER?
NOVEMBER? NEVER???** WALK

**THIRD FRIDAY OF WHATEVER
MONTH WE ARE RELEASED FROM
LOCKDOWN**

**A Series of Short Walks to Spectacular
Views**

A Quadrella of Lookouts in the Leura Area

We will walk to Moya Point Lookout, Gladstone Lookout, Sublime Point Lookout and Golf Links Lookout with a short drive between lookouts two and three, and three and four.

Meet near the tee intersection of Watkins Road and Sublime Point Road in Leura at 10.00am.

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)**

To be advised

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.**

**Bush Care will be effected by Covid
restrictions, please check with Alice
Simpson.**

**Mt Wilson contact Alice Simpson 0414 425
511 or 4756 2110**

Council contact Tracy Abbas 0428 777 141