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# Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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DELTA CORONAVIRUS ISSUE FOUR

TOPIC

## OUR CANCELLED OCTOBER WALK

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

Friday 15 October 2021

At last the coronavirus lockdowns have substantially eased and we will be able to walk in November for the penultimate walk for the group. In the meantime I have once more delved into the archives and was attracted to Mary's last walk description from 2004. Thought it would be appropriate to repeat it here as the folding up of the Group nears; a transcription of Mary's report follows.

ZIRCON CREEK, SMITHS HILL,  
YELLOW GUM FLAT MT WILSON

## OUR APRIL WALK

FRIDAY, 16<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2004

Readers will have to be a little disappointed this month as John Cardy, our regular and talented recorder of walks has been enjoying the environment in the North Island of New Zealand. The editor will try to provide something of the feel and interest of this local walk, well known to quite a few of our



Spring in the Bush

readers, but it may well fall short of expectations.

It was an incredibly warm day for April in Mt Wilson, reflecting the very mild weather we had been experiencing this Autumn. Thirteen walkers gathered on the track to Fields Selection near Zircon Creek just off the Mt Irvine Road as it winds its way between Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. Driving along this road is always a delight as it moves quietly through the rich rain forest generated by the dark basalt soil and the moist coolness of the eastern and southern slopes of the mountains.

It was pleasing to welcome Amanda Butler from Blackheath who is rarely able to join us. But this time it was school holidays and Amanda made the most of it. It was nice too to have Jess, the grandson of Norma and Kevin Quinn with us. Jess, a sturdy and reliable lad is certainly a credit to his family.

The track we followed has been here for many years and is used as access to Fields Selection where a house has been built by the present owners. The vegetation on both sides is filled with a marvellous diversity of plants. Here the soil is largely from sandstone but has benefited from the wash from basalt soils higher up the slopes. At first the track rises only slightly and then more steeply as it reaches into a more distinct rain forest environment. Thus in the early stages we were surrounded by thriving examples of the Mint

Bush or *Prostanthera violacea*, *Boronia* which flowers brilliantly here in October, many different varieties of *Hibbertia* also known as the Guinea Flower with its bright yellow colouring. One found in Mt Wilson is *Hibbertia saligna* meaning willow like leaves and it has large golden flowers up to 6cm across. There were, too, *Banksias* such as *Banksia spinulosa* with its candle like flowers golden yellow and often 15cm in length. Another tall shrub with paler green and tiny leaves was from the *Pultenaea* family or the Bush Pea. A pungent odour was noticeable at times and this probably came from *Zieria arborescens* or the Stinkwood. The unpleasant smell comes from the leaves and the timber. It grows to a small tree and is found near rain forest and has long, narrow leaves dark green in colour.

The track winds through this wonderful shrubbery and above are tall Eucalypts benefiting from the wash from basalt soils.

Subtly the environment changes as the track rises and the frequency of small dainty ferns occurs on the edges of the track while within there are samples of that well known tall *Cyathea australis*, a tree fern which fascinates so many and stands in open paddocks alone in cleared areas of Mt Wilson. Close by appear the familiar members of the rain forest *Ceratopetalum apetalum*, the tall straight Coachwood with its trunk of patches of whitish grey and rather blotched appearance and with it the *Doryphora sassafras*, another frequent occupant of this always enticing section of the forests of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine.

Later we would be seeing much more of the rain forest as we descended to Zircon Creek. However for the moment we had reached the boundary of Fields Selection, so called as a person named Field had first laid claim to it. From here we gazed eastward where on this day the haze of warmth had somewhat clouded the view. Nevertheless in the distance there was that distinct gap in the hills bounding the Cumberland Plain separating the Sydney Plain from the mountains to the west. Through that

gap flows Wheeney Creek as it finds its way to the Hawkesbury River and beyond.

We retraced our steps for a short distance then turned off to the right to begin the descent to Zircon Creek. This "track" we followed lacks any technique of skilled track construction making its descent a little hazardous. In 1994 it was made with the use of a bulldozer during the period of severe fires near Mt Wilson. Ten years later at least nature has managed to repair some of the man made ravages and the resilient members of the plant world have returned to soften the impact. Outstanding are tall slender members of the Mountain Ash or *Eucalyptus oreades*. On the southeastern slopes of Mt Wilson they normally thrive and here they were reclaiming their rightful place. Many of you would know that these trees do not regenerate after fire. They are dependant on seed regeneration to survive. Should a fire engulf them before seed is produced then they will not return. Ten years is required for seed to form.

As we carefully descend the all too familiar pungent odour of *Zieria arborescens* is detected and the glowing greens of *Pultenaea* lit the way. Meanwhile Libby demonstrated the interesting life cycle of the Cicada from a small branch lying near the track showing evidence of cicada's presence by the markings it had left on the branch. Finally we negotiate the last steps into the creek bed where a trickle only of water is bubbling slowly over the smooth pebbles. Here a coolness and softness envelop one as the shade of the forest almost entirely shuts out the sun. Remember that for April the sun was and had been rather warm. Mosses and lichens decorate the rocks and crevices and delicate ferns form a fringe and background to these elements. The litter of the rain forest is deep covering every step of the way as we clambered up out of this gentle appealing atmosphere. Halfway up we gathered on the available rocks and logs to enjoy a short break with morning tea, overseen by the graceful Coachwoods and those lovely ferns, particularly *Dicksonia antarctica* with its extended elegant green fronds and rather furry brown tops from red-brown hairs on its

trunk. Often on these same trunks are those lovely specimens belonging among the *Epiphytes* such as *Pteris rupestris* a common fern with fleshy leaves covering trunks and rock faces.

In a short distance we left this attractive setting and found ourselves climbing into a very different vegetation. Here were the tall *Eucalypts*, those fine upstanding Stringy Barks such as *Eucalyptus piperita* or the Sydney Peppermint. Tall here because there are more favourable conditions. It is interesting to note that this was the first tree from which eucalyptus oil was distilled by the surgeon on the First Fleet. There were fine specimens of *Eucalyptus viminalis* sometimes called the White Gum but also known as the Ribbon Gum. Its white trunk catching the light creating a sense of ghostliness. The ribbons of bark festooning the lower trunk and the surrounding ground.

We reached the tar sealed Mt Irvine Road briefly as we turned toward the west to Smiths Hill and to follow the route used by runners in the Mt Wilson to Bilpin Run each year in August. Leaving this road where the letter boxes for 'Gowan Ross' and 'Lindfield Park' are located, we moved down hill in to vegetation which has all the signs of rain forest remnants on each side of the track stopping to view a dam held back by a rustic, green patched stone wall. Its contents were not impressive telling the tale of little rain over the last few months. It was built in the early 1950s when 'Gowan Ross' was first established by Bill and Jane Smart. There followed discussion among us of the serious problems of poor water resources we face in Australia and how people need to be educated to understand how precious water is for our survival, especially for future generations.

The track then began to swing upwards but surrounding us were attractive fern covered expanses overhung by those ever marvellous tree ferns telling us what must have been covering all this area before it was given over to settlement and grazing of animals. On upward we climbed to the top of Smiths Hill much of it now covered with *Pteridium* or

Bracken Fern. It was knee deep as we ploughed our way through it to reach a point more on the northern side of Smiths Hill where across through the break in the more distant tree line there was a view of the ranges stretching into the distance over the Wollemi National Park and the flat topped Mt Yengo was to be easily identified. Here we paused to enjoy the spirit of tranquillity before turning to join a newly constructed road cut in to the chocolate deep basalt soil to give access to Smiths Hill for future settlement. We descended along this road until we reached its lower level and Libby then turned to the right taking us along a track I certainly had never walked before. It was edged with dainty ferns thickly growing and had a sense of something rather special. It reached an area with a few wonderful specimens of what long time locals call the Yellow Gum or *Eucalyptus cypellocarpa*. These are beautiful trees indeed with their tall almost white trunks and are not unlike *Eucalyptus oreades*. It was at Yellow Gum Flat that we found a comfortable place to sit and enjoy our lunch. While the hand of man had clearly been at work here from time to time, the presence of tree ferns and the luxuriant fern growth on the ground were hopeful signs of the capacity for regeneration. For some the presence of those small rather slimy creatures, leeches, made lunch a little less restful than it should have been as they were kept at bay by various techniques.

After lunch we retraced our steps to the constructed road commencing to make our way slowly up towards Farrer Road. It was slowly in my case I am afraid and a special thank you to Fred, Geoff and Gordon for being so patient and the others for waiting so many times for me. Clearly I am not up to standard these days. This section of the road passes settled property on the left and returning forest on the right. Once we were at the top Libby then led us through the bushland on the left along the border of Ern and Margaret Morgan's property. This was a fascinating finale to the whole walk for of course there was no track but we were moving through deeply littered cover amidst where true rain forest had reigned supreme. At first the ground

was level but as we were descending to Zircon Creek once more it was not level for long and we were moving rapidly downward through rich leaf mould and beneath a wonderful rain forested canopy.

On a number of occasions this writer found it was easier to move down on her seat rather than her legs. Perhaps others were more agile. So we did reach Zircon Creek in various ways. It is rather challenging when one looks back up the mountain we have just descended, reminding us of the distance we have just covered. Nevertheless it was a most satisfying and rewarding walk covering a wide range of vegetation and experiences.

Libby had to return to her garden as she was expecting a bus load. Such is the way of life in April in Mt Wilson. Some of us stayed a little while, enjoying the company and the conversation.

Mary Reynolds (2004)

There you have it, a walk led by Libby Raines and described by Mary Reynolds; the two wonderful ladies who jointly founded this walking Group more than thirty one years ago. They are both so greatly missed by so many.

With my inability to participate in hard, protracted walks these days the last two walks for the Group will be relatively short. I take some solace from an Oscar Wilde quote, paraphrased here: I do still like long walks, especially when they are taken by people who annoy me. (Group members excluded of course.)

John Cardy

## **OUR NOVEMBER WALK**

### **Change of plan from Leura Lookouts**

**FRIDAY 19<sup>th</sup> November 2021** (Penultimate walk for the Group)

**Open Woodland and Heath, High Vantage Points, Valley Views, Pagoda Formations.**

### **Jinki Ridge off the Bells Line of Road**

The Group last visited this venue in June 2019. A short gentle walk, which rewards you

with magnificent views into the Upper Grose Gorge and some unusually weather-sculpted pagoda outcrops to explore.

Meet at the cleared parking area beside the Bells Line of Road (left hand side when heading west) 3.5 kms west of the junction of Mt Wilson Rd and Bells Line of Road at 10.00am. If travelling from the Mt Victoria or Lithgow direction the meeting place is 4.0 kms from the junction of the Darling Causeway and Bells Line of Road (immediately past the line of centre concrete dividers on the bend at Flagstaff Hill).

**Please take extreme care with traffic passing at speed, there have been many accidents at this spot. If travelling from the west it is suggested you continue on for about a kilometre where you will find a relatively safe area to stop and do a U-turn and return to the meeting place.**

**Bring brunch / lunch and plenty of water.**

**Contact Helen and John Cardy on 9871 3661 or on mobile 0400 444 966.**

## **FUTURE WALK (Last for the Group)**

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December – A walk in Mt Wilson followed by a celebratory lunch on the lawn at Merry Garth. This will be a mainly self-catering affair bringing your own lunch, drinks, glasses and mugs, etc. Cake will be supplied and served but bring your own plates. More details in next newsletter.

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## **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 program could be effected by Covid restrictions, please check with Alice Simpson or the Mt Wilson website.**

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

**Council contact Tracy Abbas 0428 777 141**