
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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LOGGING TRAILS AND MILL AT MT WILSON

TOPIC

OUR DECEMBER WALK

WATERFALLS, OLD
LOGGING TRAILS and
TIMBER MILL, and
DAINTREE LANE at MOUNT
WILSON

Friday 17th December 2021

Eighteen of the expected nineteen walkers gathered at Waterfall Reserve, including Andrew Mitchell who will be helping Peter Raines with the future running of this Group. The missing nineteenth was in fact our leader for the day, Peter Raines, who had been called to a medical incident in his role as First Responder; such are the vagaries of life at Mt Wilson. In a quick phone call to Peter he suggested we start off on the walk and he would catch up; that should be no problem for him considering the pace I walk at these days.

So, with me unexpectedly leading the group, briefly, one more time, we set off with Des Barrett bringing up the rear as whip. The sky was overcast and the Waterfall Track was even more enchanting than usual as there was a heavy mountain mist just starting to rise. The moist foliage pressed in on both sides of the track and droplets of water fell from the forest canopy; more so when a puff of breeze swayed the branchlets high above.



Summer in the Bush

Soon the sound of cascading water could be heard and as we entered the rainforest Coachwood (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*), with their smooth whitish blotched trunks, and Sassafras (*Doryphora sassafras*), with trunks encased in rough bark, dominated; both varieties standing straight and tall as they reach for the energy of the sun.

The track drops down toward the creek and a side track

switches back to lead us to a view of the upper falls on Waterfall Creek. Three white ribbons drop down the face of

the dark basalt cliff and join at the base to continue down the creek line coursing through moss shrouded boulders below the gently bowed fronds of Soft Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*).

It was here that Peter caught up with us and I can think of no more beautiful spot in which to end my leadership of the Group.

Peter pointed out that the transition from basalt to sandstone begins at the base of these upper falls and a little further downstream indicated some smooth worn sluices in the sandstone where, as children, they used to sit on hessian bags and slide down these natural slippery dips. He also mentioned that during the heavy flooding in 2011, silt and debris-filled floodwater scoured all the mosses, lichen and ground ferns off this section of creek exposing the buff, cream, ochre and tawny bands of the underlying sandstone. The

subsequent ten years has seen all that lush green shrouding return in abundance.

A little further down the slope, at a point where there were a couple of trees growing on the creek side of the track, Peter explained if you leant slightly over the edge, you could see the wall of a small dam. This was the water supply for the boiler at the steam driven mill we would visit a little later on this walk.

Soon a second side track led us down to a view of the lower falls; far smaller than the upper falls but no less beautiful. Below these falls remnants of the water pipe once taking feed water to the mill boiler can be seen.

The track now takes us away from the creek and as it rises Peter pointed out the change in the vegetation from rainforest to tall open forest containing some towering eucalypts.

Soon we left the track and began heading downhill taking care not to be caught in the grasping clutches of the Lawyer Vine or Austral Sarsaparilla (*Smilax australis*). Presently we were walking along the remains of a forest giant, which must have fallen many many years ago. The remnants of this arboreal titan are now but a slightly raised path of soil about two metres wide; the cycle of decomposition now almost complete, returning this colossus to the earth from whence it came.

A little further on Peter pointed out the first evidence of the old logging trails; a definite clear passage through the trees as you looked back up the hill and a depression in the ground is still evident from the drag of the logs. Soon there is a conspicuous fork where another logging trail combines with the first sighting.

Presently we cross the crystal clear rippling waters of the creek and follow the line of the logging trail. We are now at a wonderful stand of Blue Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*). In this area the outer edges of the logging trail displayed deeper grooves where the logs have dug into the ground as they were pulled around the curves.

Here a 'cicada stick' is found and Peter explains that the cicada chooses a dead

branchlet on which it pierces the bark to form tiny pockets into which it lays its eggs. When the branchlet falls to the ground the nymphs hatch, or they hatch in the tree and fall to the ground unharmed, and burrow into the soil where they may stay feeding on tree roots for up to seven years. They emerge, often after rain, to provide that quintessential chorus of the Australian bush for just a few weeks.

A fallen tree trunk provides convenient seating to pause for morning tea. My better half Helen distributes slices of her delicious version of the Libby bushwalker cake.

We leave our packs here for it is just a short distance to the remains of Syd and Albert Kirk's timber mill.

This mill was established just after the end of World War I when an arrangement was made with the owner of the land, Richard Owen Wynne, to lease the land to Syd Kirk who would have sole rights to cutting timber on the land and that he would supply timber to Richard Wynne.

Little remains of the mill, which operated from the end of WWI to 1967. The boiler still stands in the encroaching vegetation, as does the planer, manufactured by TM Goodall & Co of Sydney, for machining weatherboards and tongue and groove boards. Sections of line shafts and pulleys lay half buried among a jumble of twisted rusting corrugated iron. So this mill, which usurped so much of the rainforest timbers, is now, in turn, being consumed by the regenerating bushland.

(Detailed information on the Mt Wilson Mills can be accessed on the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Website: www.mtwilson.com.au Select: Main Menu Select: Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Historical Society Select: Occasional Historical Papers Select: Paper No14 Axemen and Sawmills.)

So we left this mouldering piece of Mt Wilson history and skirted around the fence line of the Mill Paddock. Along the way we encountered quite a few examples of the Slender Violet (*Hybanthus monopetalus*) displaying their prominent mauve major petal which

overshadows the two minor petals of this attractive little flower.

We then turned into Daintree Lane, an unmade road which skirts the uphill side of the Mill Paddock. Here the view down across the open pasture with grazing cattle presents a lovely bucolic scene. However, we are soon back in rainforest where thick vines encrusted with lush moss climb up through the trees; there is an overwhelming greenness of mosses and lichens on rocks and tree trunks. We come across a large excavation in the rich basalt soil, not so much a burrow but a wombat's palace; this haughty marsupial was indeed making an unequivocal statement.

As Daintree Lane nears and runs parallel with Queens Avenue, Peter mentions that Syd Kirk installed spikes in a tall tree nearby so that he could climb to the top and watch the fireworks when the American Fleet sailed into Sydney Harbour; a very resourceful lot the Kirks.

And so we crossed the upper reaches of Waterfall Creek and it was just a short climb back to the cars in Waterfall Reserve. If it had been any further I don't think I would have made it; my legs were telling me in no uncertain terms the time had come to hang up the walking boots.

We then made our way to Merry Garth, many thanks to Beth for her hospitality, to meet up with members and friends for a picnic lunch on the Children's Lawn; a very pleasant way both to end the day and Helen's and my walking time with the group.

John Cardy

At the picnic lunch Barbara Harry kindly made a farewell speech, on behalf of the Group, to Helen and me; a transcript follows.

Barbara Harry's Farewell to Helen and John

It seems we've reached the end of one chapter of our Bushwalking era. A period of friendship, adventures and camaraderie over 30 years of walking in the glorious Blue Mountains through many marvellous and some dramatic weather conditions.

Welcome everyone today to this 'Blessed Enclosure' the superb Merry Garth garden, thank you Beth for hosting us today for our farewell picnic. Sadly Ray Nesci could not join us. Ray was a very regular walker and always had a joke to share, which elicited a wry smile or groan. Kim and Tim Gow, and Alison Halliday were also sorry not to be here today.

It was here in this garden that the nucleus of an idea for a walking group had its birth in an idea developed by Mary Reynolds and Libby Raines.

Mary first, then Libby, wrote a brief account of the planned walk, times and places. These accounts at first were half a handwritten page, progressing to half a typed page then to a full typed page, and eventually several pages detailing the last walk. The symbol of the Swamp Wallaby also became the logo. I think Libby's famous bushwalking cake may have even been there from the beginning. It continued to the end as the special recipe was passed on for others to most successfully reproduce.

Enter John and Helen Cardy. I thought I knew the story of their introduction to the Mt Wilson walking group, but on the day Helen told it more accurately and in more detail. The gist of it being that Helen met my next door neighbour from Mt Wilson, Elaine Turnidge, in a shop at Carlingford. She told Helen of the walking group which Helen and John then joined. I'm sure they were not then aware of the close involvement they were destined to have with, and the great contribution they were to make, to our group.

It was a most fortuitous meeting for us all. Helen and John became involved in many aspects of the Mt Wilson community, attending functions and events and always being strong participants in the organisation and involvement on the day. They frequently stayed with Helen and Barry Freeman.

However, the constant was the Bushwalking. John researched the walks with Libby and notified members of meeting time and place

with destination for the day, in the wonderful Newsletter.

I think John revelled in finding fascinating facts about the history of the area, the explorations and all sorts of trifling trivia, which he incorporated with the news of the walk. I always marvelled at his knowledge and ability to remember the plants, trees and shrubs we encountered. In his quiet manner he must have been making mind imprints all the way. I have, and I know others also have, folders of all the newsletters. At our picnic Simon had brought many of his copies, all annotated and colourfully presented in fabulous collaged folders for people to peruse. (Thanks Simon.)

I hope John you have plans afoot for other projects to occupy some of the many hours you devoted to walks and newsletters.

The composition of the group was constantly evolving and changed considerably over time. (I learnt on this walk that John and Helen were involved for 26 years and in that time missed only 19 walks.) Fewer Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine people attended over time, but others from different parts of the mountains, and further afield, joined the group. Freda was one who, to assist John, organised and led some of the walks. It seems Peter Raines has some plans and ideas in mind to continue walks as John steps down as master of ceremonies.

Today, however, we are celebrating the end of this era in which John and Helen will now form part of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine history, for their years of magnificent contribution to us all in the bushwalking group.

We thank you both for enriching our lives every month over so many years.

Barbara Harry

The group then presented Helen and me with a magnificent Don Sheil polished alloy platter carrying a beautiful flowering gum design; a very befitting touch. Totally unexpected and we were a little embarrassed to accept it, but it is something we will cherish always. It has taken pride of place in our dining room and

will be a constant reminder of our times together.

Some Concluding Thoughts

I felt I should put together a few parting words on this, the last walk Helen and I will be undertaking with the Group, and very sadly the last newsletter I will be writing.

It was in May 1990 that 17 walkers and 2 dogs made their way to the Tessellated Pavements on that first walk for the group.

Helen and I joined the group in October 1995, but the first walk we attended was on 30th March 1996 to the Glow Worm Tunnel; it was on this day that we first met Libby Raines. The following walk on 19th April was to Centennial Glen and Porters Pass at Blackheath and it was on this walk that we met Mary Reynolds.

What a huge vote of thanks we all owe those two wonderful ladies. It was their vision and foresight to establish this walking group almost thirty-two years ago. I dare say not in their wildest dreams would they have imagined it would still be operating today after 386 walks; thanks to Libby's son Peter it will continue into the future.

To keep the group operating over subsequent years we must thank Helen Freeman for acting as treasurer and maintaining the membership list, in more recent years she has maintained the mailing list for the newsletter and looked after printing the address labels.

I would also like to thank those who acted as whip on walks which I led over the last 4 years or so; Des Barrett, Freda Moxom, Allan Cupitt and others. Also many thanks to all those who continued the tradition of baking the bushwalker cake after we lost Libby.

Many thanks also to my better half Helen for maintaining the membership list, looking after the subscriptions, trotting off to Officeworks once a month to have the newsletters printed but more importantly for her magnificent

efforts in organising our end of year functions, birthday and anniversary celebrations and putting together those wonderful photographic collages for many of those celebrations.

But most importantly I thank all those who have supported the group over the years either as participating walkers or as armchair walkers.

It has been a great pleasure for Helen and myself to be involved with the group for 26 years; an activity which led us to become deeply involved with the Mount Wilson / Mt Irvine community and which indeed changed our lives in so many ways. Our activities with the Mt Wilson / Mt Irvine Historical Society, a flow on from joining the walking group, led us to many happy times staying with Mary and Ellis Reynolds at Donna Buang and spending time with Florence Smart and Arthur Delbridge at Westring. We spent several weeks on two separate occasions looking after Merry Garth when Libby and Keith were overseas, and we formed an enduring friendship with Helen and Barry Freeman, often staying with them at Nioka and spending time with them in their treasured garden.

But back to the walking group. Helen and I have had the pleasure of participating in 289 walks with the group, missing only 19 since we joined. The December walk was number 386 since the group was formed in May 1990.

The first walk report I wrote was in December 1998 describing our walk to Happy Valley. Since then I have written 239 reports, an endeavour I have really enjoyed, in the main, except for the writer's block which occasionally occurred when I was writing about the same walk for the fourth or fifth time and trying to come up with a different slant; I hope I succeeded.

(I am reminded of the quote: 'Authors with a mortgage never get writer's block.' I didn't have that driving motivational force however.)

The first newsletter wholly produced by me and printed and distributed by Helen was for the Popes Glen to Pulpit Rock walk in February 2009. Subsequently there has been 139 issues produced, printed and distributed by Helen and me.

I think I will miss writing the newsletters as much as I will miss the walks, they gave me the opportunity to mentally re-walk the paths we had followed and led me to investigate the history, geography and flora associated with each walk. However, as they say, all good things must come to an end, perhaps in future I could write about imaginary walks; some in the group have intimated that is what I have always done.

With those few words it is with a heavy heart that we have decided the time has come for our retirement from the group but we are elated that Peter has decided to carry the group forward with the assistance of Janet McDonald and Andrew Mitchell.

Thanks to you all for 26 years of companionship, discovery, adventure and enjoyment.

Not goodbye but AU REVOIR

Don't forget the picnic get togethers planned for the coming year to stay in touch. A schedule of four events is included separately.

The Continuing Future of the Group

Following are details of Peter Raines's proposed walk programme for 2022 and some details regarding Upper Blue Mountains Bushwalking Club. It is a very well varied selection of walks and Peter's vast knowledge of the mountains will certainly add to the experience on each walk; please give him your support in continuing Libby and Mary's legacy.

Peter Raines's **DRAFT** Programme for 2022 to be held under the umbrella of Upper Blue Mountains Bushwalking Club.

18 February – Mt Banks / Banks Wall / Frank Hurley Head

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Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

18 March – Happy Valley / Cathedral Creek / Lambs Hill

8 April – Haystack Ridge (Moved to second Friday of April due to Easter)

20 May – Sunday Walk Spur / Old Mt Wilson Road

17 June – Asgard Swamp / Thor Head / Asgard Head

15 July – The Pavements

19 August – Goochs Crater

16 September – Crawford Lookout / Hollow Rock

21 October – The Runners Track / Scriveners Pass

18 November – Kanangra Walls

16 December – Boronia Point plus Logging Trails

Everyone participating in a club activity must be a financial member. Go to <https://ubmbc.org.au/membership> to join the Upper Blue Mountains Bushwalking Club. Your membership application will direct you to PayPal and this can be done with a credit card; Peter says it was quite straightforward. Membership also gives you insurance cover.

When your membership has been processed, you will be sent a copy of the club's current activities programme containing detailed descriptions of the activities, contact details of the leader, meeting arrangements, etc for each activity. You will have online access to the Club's Programme through the Member's Area of the Web Site.

Peter's email address is gowanrossfarms@gmail.com if you have further queries.

And there ends my last Newsletter, No 239. I feel quite emotional as I write these words for I have enjoyed this endeavour so much. I do hope they have brought a degree of enjoyment to you all and a little extra insight into the flora, fauna, geography and history of the places we have explored together over the years. And that they have helped instil

memories of the experiences we have shared; memories which can be called upon to refresh the mind and lift the spirits.

Let me finish with a quote from a person I have the greatest admiration for, John Muir, Scottish / American naturalist and conservationist; advocate and protector of National Parks.

“Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn.”