
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

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DANES WAY,
TRAIL AND THE

Our October Walk

FRIDAY 15TH OCTOBER
2004

On this walk we were to touch an assemblage of widely varying elements. There was a hint of the Scandinavian, miraculous food, Sydney Harbour ferries, plundered rhubarb, a Eureka event, direct historical links, reminiscences and of course the natural beauty of the bushland both in the flesh and artistically encapsulated.

The eleven walkers who gathered outside "Carisbrook" at Mt Irvine were treated to a significant change from the heatwave of the last couple of days. The biting chill wind gave a twist to the name Danes Way. It could well have referred to the Nordic climatic conditions rather than the name of the road.

As we made our way toward the end of Danes Way we were exposed to the glorious sight of a profusion of golden blossom of the Bush-Pea [*Pultenea sp.*]. Dotted among all this bullion was a generous sprinkling of lilac jewels, the pea like flowers of the native Indigo [*Indigofera australis*].

Having entered the "Yurunga" property we crossed open grazing land past a group of totally disinterested cattle. This area is dotted with a few small thickets of regenerating



Spring in the Bush

THE MT IRVINE FIRE RAMPARTS

Sassafras [*Doryphora sassafras*]. We then moved into a more wooded area where among many other varieties there were examples of Blaxland Stringy Bark [*Eucalyptus blaxlandii*] and Brown Barrels [*Eucalyptus fastigata*]. Every time I read that species name 'fastigata' I hear the accented pronunciation of the word by our dear absent friend Hans. Below this tall open canopy the track is bordered in parts by wide

swaths of deep green Kangaroo Fern [*Microsorium pustulatum*].

Soon we reach "Booralee", the property of Ron and Helen Naylor and take advantage of some convenient logs as seating for morning tea. Helen Naylor joined us and regaled the group with a story of the wombat which had recently stolen all her rhubarb. Her stated hope that the ill-gotten gains made the wombat sick immediately generated a picture in my seriously weird imagination of a wombat with one paw holding a swollen belly and another across its mouth and bulging cheeks as it dashed to the WC [Wombat Closet].

At this spot we were sitting beneath a huge Manna or Ribbon Gum [*Eucalyptus viminalis*]. The manna or divine food refers to the many sugary nodules on the leaves which are triggered by insect attack. There are also many examples of young Turpentines

[*Syncarpia glomulifera*] here. Their many forbears were logged in this area and used for piers at Circular Quay.

Helen decided she could not pass up the opportunity of spending a few hours in such fine company and elected to join us for the rest of the walk. She graciously invited the group to wander through her garden while she booted up. [She was already switched on].

The views from this property are magnificent. Exotic trees and shrubs in the foreground, the canopy of bushland in the middle distance giving no hint whatever of the chasm which is Bowens Creek between here and the grassy slopes of Mt Tootie and Little Mt Tootie. In the far distance the truncated profile of Mt Yengo juts above the general line of the horizon. A beautiful property in a magical location.

The path down the slope and onto the eastern fire trail is bordered by some grand old Smooth-barked Apples or Red Gums [*Anhophera costata*] a number of which were displaying dark red stains of exuded sap which appeared as open wounds on the smooth bark. The Grey Gum [*Eucalyptus punctata*] was also in evidence here.

A short distance along the trail we took a deviation to the left which led to a small cliff on which many Rock Orchids [*Dendrobium speciosum*] grew. A huge vertical sided boulder at the base of the cliff acted as an island sanctuary for these orchids where, out of reach of the wallabies, they grew and flowered prodigiously. On the way back to the fire trail one of those quirks of nature was noted. A single Pink Spider Flower [*Grevillea sericea*] was sighted- one lone shrub carrying a single flower.

On the low side of the track a small grove of Blueberry Ash [*Elaeocarpus reticulatus*] stood. Some of these were still carrying a few blue berries from last year. The slope on the high side carried some majestic examples of Blue Mountains Ash [*Eucalyptus oreades*] festooned with long ribbons of discarded bark. At the track side was a Pine-leaved Geebung [*Persoonia pinifolia*] its slender branches

weighed down by an abundance of pale green globular fruit. Nearby the showy bright yellow flowers of an Ivy Goodenia [*Goodenia hederacea*] provided a perfect contrast to the delicate light blue crinkled flowers of a Blue Damperia [*Damperia stricta*]. Throughout this area the bush was illuminated by random clumps of golden *Pultenea*.

A little further on a tiny birds' nest was found apparently dislodged by the wind. It was exquisitely woven and nestled comfortably in one hand. In the soft inner lining two minute orange/ yellow gems glistened. On closer examination it was decided they were droplets of sap. While it is always a delight to hold and closely study a nest such as this there is always that feeling of regret for the bird losing the benefit of its hard work. One can only hope the nest had served its purpose before being dislodged.

As the fire trail descends slightly toward Humpty Creek the surrounds are more lush. The shaded edge of the track here was decorated with a carpet of delicate moss consisting of individual parts resembling seven pointed stars. There were many soft Tree Ferns [*Dicksonia antarctica*] here and an abundance of Birds Nest Ferns [*Asplenium australasicum*] high on the trunks of huge host trees. Across the track from these horticultural birds nests was an ornithological nest. A Yellow Scrub Wren nest was hanging pendulous from the tip of a slender branch.

Humpty Creek was so named because Basil Knight Brown and Harold Morley, two of the first settlers on Mt Irvine built a bark humpty for shelter in this vicinity. Helen Naylor provided our direct historical link, Harold Morley was her father.

Continuing along the fire trail we passed many examples of the Sweet Pittosporum or Mock Orange [*Pittosperum undulatum*]. The sun shimmered off the undulating edges of their glossy leaves. Soon we were below "Circadia", the abode of Sue and Bruce Gailey and here we left the fire trail to follow Painui Gully. In stark contrast to our last visit here the creek was now completely dry and the

usually moist lush moss was desiccated. Sue and Bruce had, many years ago, constructed a track along the edge of this gully, a track which was easy to follow but in no way impinged on the natural beauty of the area. There was evidence they had carried out some minor maintenance recently in anticipation of our visit. Many thanks to you both.

Quite a few readers would be aware Sue and Bruce were original members of this walking group and attended regularly until joint problems [I hasten to add that is joints of the orthopaedic type not the funny smoking variety] prevented their participation. Sue and Bruce are shortly and with some reluctance leaving The Mountain; we all wish you well. A small community can ill afford to lose members who give so much so willingly and with such grace and good humour. The loss to Mt Irvine and Mt Wilson will most certainly be a real gain for the North Coast. On a personal note Bruce, many thanks for the pleasant companionship on so many walks.

Although the banks of the gully in this rainforest area were so dry there was an abundance of *Dracophyllum secumdatum* here in full flower. These beautiful small tubular flowers which open to five recurved lobes are carried in clusters along one side only of their stems.

About halfway along this gully Helen Freeman let out a squeal of delight—"Now I know where I am!" It had only taken about three hours for Helen to work out we weren't heading for the Tessellated Pavements. Eureka—just as well we hadn't arranged to meet you there Helen!

As we climb up to the ridge we pass an example of the Slender Mint-Bush [*Prostanthera saxicola* var. *saxicola*] with its long branchlets of mauve flowers swaying gently. Soon a few Native Iris or Purple Flags [*Patersonia serica*] are sighted and the tempo picks up with the appearance of many Black-eyed Susans [*Tetralochea ericifolia*] interspersed with the brilliant yellow blossom of the *Hibbertia saligna*. This symphony of colour reaches a crescendo with masses of the

soft and dainty Pale—Pink Boronia [*Boronia floribunda*] among the barren rock outcrops. All this with a lilting background of a multitude of tiny white flowers carried by the Mountain Baeckea [*Baeckea utilis*]

We are now at The Ramparts. This unusual rock outcrop consists of sandstone humps from which fins of ironstone protrude. The view across Bowens Creek to the Bilpin area is spectacular. Off to the right the serpentine line of Bowens Creek road descending towards the bridge is clearly visible while less prominent is the descending zig zag on the Bilpin side. Helen Naylor reminisced about riding her horse out to this point and of cooking sausages over a fire set in the hollows of the rock platform.

As we lazed here in the warm sun our minds I'm sure drifted back to our own experiences in those by-gone days. Days when life was in so many ways much harder than now however there were so many simple genteel pleasures which no longer seem to exist.

Having partaken of lunch, Libby's bushwalkers cake and enough ultra-violet rays for one day we reluctantly removed the rose coloured glasses and retraced our path to the fire trail.

Ray Harrington invited us to detour through their property "Chalumeau" on the way back to Mt Irvine Road. What a wonderful job Kath and Ray have done over the years on this block, for that is all it was when they arrived. The view to the east is stunning. In the foreground the slope to the fire trail is planted with a mix of exotics and natives, at this time some magnificent Waratahs, both red and white forms, are prominent. The distant view is dominated by the majestic presence of Wheeny Gap.

We were invited into the studio where we viewed some of Ray's impressionist paintings of the many areas in which we have walked. It was a special experience to view a scene knowing you were there when the seed of that painting was sown. Also on show were fine examples of the exquisite finely detailed

botanic art created by Kath. Many thanks Ray for suggesting this delightful interlude.

The walk concluded with a stroll along Mt Irvine Road to the fire trail which connects to Bowens Creek Road and a short walk back to the shuffled cars left opposite "Rutherglen". We polished off the customary afternoon cup of tea before the short ride back up Danes Way to collect the cars left there. Fond farewells were made and we headed home to eagerly await the next venture into the magnificent landscape of these mountains.

Thank you once again to John Cardy for his entertaining and informative account of our latest walk which contained such a diversity of cultural experiences to reinforce the wonders of the bush.



Above our group enjoying lunch at the Ramparts. Thank you to Geoff Kelly for the digital photography.

Libby has also requested that we express our appreciation to Bruce and Sue Gailey for enabling the Group to use their delightful track to the Ramparts and a special thank you to Bruce for clearing the track.

Thanks too must be extended to John Kirk and the Naylor family for allowing the Group to walk through their properties and Alan Gunn for arranging for the Group to use the key to open the gates on the Fire Trail.

Our November Walk

TO LOCKLEY'S PYLON off THE MT HAY ROAD.

FRIDAY 19TH NOVEMBER 2004

This is always a popular walk. It is especially lovely at this time of the year when the many plants of the heath will be in flower. It will be our third visit so far as I can tell. We first walked there in June 1995 and then in March 2000 when towards the end of the walk there was torrential rain never to be forgotten by those who experienced it. However it is a walk of wonderful vistas of the Grose Valley and expansive heath lands.

As there are extensive road works on the Great Western Highway at Leura near the turn off to Mt Hay Road it will be helpful to meet further along the Mt Hay Road beyond the turn off to Churchill St. Note that Leura Public School is on the corner of Mt Hay Road and the Highway.

Meet at the corner of Roosevelt St and Mt Hay Road Leura at 9.30a.m. or at 'Merry Garth' at 8.45 a.m. Four wheel drive vehicles would be very welcome. There will be some rationalization of vehicles.

Bring morning tea ,lunch and afternoon tea.

FURTHER WALKS

With December approaching there is only one walk left for this year but there is the Christmas Barbecue on 2nd Friday i.e. 10th December 2004 at 6.00 p.m. Everyone I am sure is very familiar with the organization. It is held at "Merry Garth" due to the generous hospitality of Keith and Libby Raines and Beth.

Bring your own utensils, meat, salads, bread, drinks. Desserts and tea and coffee are supplied. Bring your friends and family.

The December Walk will take place in the afternoon of Friday 10th December 2004 .It will be to Rigby Hill off the Bells Line of Road.

BUSH CARE

Similarly Friday 10th December will be the last Bush Care Day for the year. Meet at Rimon in Waterfall Road Mt Wilson at 9.00 a.m. For further information contact Beth Raines at 4756 2121.

Nature Story from Libby

A pair of Grey Thrushes have made their nest on the veranda in some "Monkey Ferns" outside the bathroom window at Elly and Alan Gunn's home at Mount Irvine. Elly has had to put up a special curtain on the window as the light was shining on to the nest at night. Elly and Alan watched with interest as the nest was made and three small eggs with a few spots were laid. Both the male and female thrush have been taking it in turn to sit on the eggs.— We will give you an update next month.

MEMBERS' NEWS

Rosemary and George Knott have just returned from their tour of Eastern Europe where they found much to learn and enjoy.

Those of you who remember Ern Morgan will be interested to know that he and Margaret are in Sydney with their family. Margaret was not well and had to spend some time in hospital in Sydney. We do hope she will soon be strong and recovered.

One of our new members, Gordon Bills' wife Avis has been in hospital and is slowly improving. We send her our warmest good wishes for better times ahead.

The Departure of Bruce and Sue Gailey from Mt Irvine.

John Cardy has already referred to the great loss for us all their going will be. As foundation members of the walking group they have been constant in their support and loyalty. It was a great blow to them when they could no longer be active walkers. However they have, as you have read above about our last walk, continued to help wherever they can. Dedicated to conservation and the preservation of our beautiful bushland, they have been involved in Bush Care from its inception and have been responsible for major improvements and bush regeneration in our district. Much could be written about their care of the bush on the Bowens Creek Road and down at Bowens Creek near the bridge.

Finally may I include with some comments I wrote about Sue and Bruce for the Historical Society Annual meeting—" " Above all

those examples of their generosity of time, knowledge, experience, skills and energy are their deep concern and thoughtfulness for their fellow human beings, their sense of compassion for the deprived people of this very unfair world we live in, their tolerance and willingness to listen and understand differences, their belief in the protection of the environment along with their love of the natural bushland and their total gentleness of spirit dedicated to the struggle to make this world a better place for ordinary people."

We wish them peace and restfulness in their new life. Our hearts go with them. They will be much missed by their many friends in the mountains.

FOR OUR NOVEMBER WALK on 19th November 2004

Please let Libby know about the 4 Wheel drives which are available.

Contact Libby Raines on 4756 2121 or Mary Reynolds on 4756 2006.

We wish to acknowledge the assistance of **C&W Printing Mort St Lithgow** with the printing of this newsletter.