
Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

Volume 31 Issue 3

March 2021

UNDERCLIFF AND OVERCLIFF TRACKS

TOPIC

OUR FEBRUARY WALK

UNDERCLIFF, OVERCLIFF
and SHORTCUT TRACKS at
WENTWORTH FALLS

Friday 19th February 2021

Following heavy rain overnight at Wentworth Falls it was decided to blast Rocket Point Lookout off the itinerary and do only the Undercliff, Overcliff and Shortcut Tracks. The weather gods were kind to us as nine walkers gathered at the Picnic Area car park at the end of Falls Road. The rain eased to a light shower as Freda, with her local knowledge, led us off with Michael bringing up the rear. The 'view' as we passed Jamison Lookout was of a white wall of mist. We continued on to the track which led us down to Princes Rock Lookout, passing along the way an old drinking trough carved into the rock face beneath a stone arch. (Princes Rock was named after Prince Alfred Ernest Albert, Duke of Edinburgh 1844-1900 who visited this area in January 1868.)

As we approached the lookout we could hear the roar of the Falls as the copious waters of Jamison Creek plummeted into the Jamison Valley far below us. The view before us now was spectacular. The valley floor was obscured by mist but some of the vertical sandstone cliff faces and talus slopes were visible, decorated by wisps of mist swirling up



Autumn in the Bush

from the valley. The jewel of course, among this treasure chest of sights, was of the waters of Wentworth Falls cascading over the upper rock face before dropping freely as silver shreds to the mid point of the Falls; curtains of mist opened and closed across this striking aspect. The well crafted stone walls and parapets at this lookout, and indeed at most of the lookouts we paused at today, were constructed by Irish immigrant Peter Mulheron who worked on many mountain walking tracks in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

One could have spent quite some time here as the mist rose and fell, twisted and spiralled, revealing the ever-changing scenery but the Undercliff Track was waiting to be explored.

We made our way down the link track from Princes Rock Lookout to the Undercliff Track, which was closed for track maintenance, in the easterly direction, between this junction and Fletchers Lookout, but we headed west. Not far along this track we came to an almost vertical wall of Pouched Coral Fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*), the brilliant green fronds sparkling after the rain; emerging from below this filigree wall was a small cascade of clear water which disappeared beneath the track. The bright pink flowers of the Grass Leaf Trigger Plant (*Stylidium graminifolium*) occasionally illuminated the trackside. We passed under several deep rock overhangs, water trickling from their edges after the rain.

Hanging from the rock face beside the track was a swath of clumped grass-like growth appearing as a vegetative “water fall”, I know not what it was. Nearby, the soft pink new growth of a few Rasp Ferns (*Doodia aspera*) brightened the scene.

Soon we arrived at the junction of the Undercliff, Overcliff and Den Fenella Tracks. After crossing the small bridge over Den Fenella Creek we diverted to the left to head down to Den Fenella Lookout. This track follows closely beside the creek and we were treated to the sound of the rushing water and the sight of silver cascades flowing over dark rock shelves between moss and fern encrusted creek banks. The walls of this little valley encroached closer to each other as we descended deeper and crossed, then re-crossed, the creek. We then emerged onto a cliff ledge which took us to the lookout, a very narrow eyrie which today gave us views of the forest canopy directly, and far below, and a blanket of white further away from the cliff.

Den Fenella was named by Captain James Murray, of Scottish descent, who retired to Wentworth Falls, after a ravine of the same name near his birthplace. Fenella, the daughter of the Earl of Angus, murdered the Scottish King Kenneth III and was killed herself near the ravine.

We made our way back up the creek-side track, once again taking in the beauty of the cascades, and started our exploration of the Overcliff Track.

We began the climb up towards Breakfast Point Lookout. In 1892 Captain James Murray suggested a track be constructed to Breakfast Point. We passed a Smooth-barked Apple (*Angophora costata*) displaying its smooth, freshly exposed, orange/yellow bark. At Breakfast Point Lookout, from behind another Mulheron wall, we were treated to a superb view. Here we could see, through the parting shroud of fog, the floor of the Jamison Valley extending toward Kedumba Valley. The bulky forms of Kedumba Walls on the left, and Mount Solitary to the right, loomed out of the vaporous pall; the horizontal layer of white

mist which stretched between these two monoliths, was rising toward the low grey cloud cover; a glorious vista.

As we continued in this now more open heath-like environment we encountered several stubby Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea sp*) their moist skirts of long narrow cascading leaves glowing in the now emerging sunshine. Also present here were several examples of the ubiquitous Mountain Devil or Honey Flower (*Lambertia formosa*) displaying their tubular red flowers.

Further on, Daniel’s younger eyes spotted an owl sitting in a tree adjacent to the track, it was completely unperturbed by our presence; Jenni identified it as a Boobook Owl, I guess from the really dark discs surrounding its eyes. Soon after that sighting we disturbed a Brown Cuckoo-Dove, again identified by Jenni, which flew across the track and disappeared into the undergrowth further down the slope. (Thanks for the IDs Jenni; my recognition of birds doesn’t extend much further than telling the difference between a Magpie and a Kookaburra.)

We encountered another younger, slender-trunked Angophora, in this case the newly exposed bark was an amazing array of the colour green, the varying shades emphasised by the moisture of the rain, a sight to behold; something I have not seen before.

The refurbishment of the Overcliff Track, especially in the muddy, spongy areas below the hanging swamps is magnificent. Large stepping stones, or should I say blocks, about one metre long laid across the track at one pace intervals and sitting well above the slush. In some areas the track is bordered by cut sandstone and inlaid with really well fitted ‘crazy paving’; a real credit to the skills of the track builders.

Beside one of these sections there is a small open gutter, obviously constructed in earlier times, to prevent water washing across the track. Here, tucked in amongst miniature ferns and mosses, was an example of the Slender Violet (*Hybanthus monopetalus*) displaying its bluish mauve conspicuous petals which

overshadow the two tiny side petals of each flower.

The clouds were beginning to break now and through the trees we got fleeting glimpses of the sunlit sandstone cliffs on the other side of the Valley of the Waters.

Soon we were at the Lyrebird Lookout where once again the valley was filled with mist. Unseen, but certainly heard, was the roar of Empress Falls and the lesser cascades of the Valley of the Waters far below, the sound increased markedly if you leant over yet another Mulheron wall; there is something mystic about hearing the power of the falls emanating from the fog.

And so we began the climb up toward the Conservation Hut, this section of track was lined with sandstone blocks and other material awaiting use in further refurbishment.

We encountered yet another Angophora whose bark had shed in small discs leaving bright orange to red spots surrounded by dark mature bark; the Angophora is obviously very versatile.

Just short of the Conservation Hut we turned right onto the Shortcut Track to head back to the cars at the Picnic Area. This track undulates through open woodland and heath. We stood aside to let a group of young people go ahead; they were very courteous as they passed and then took off at a gallop; oh to have that energy once again.

On reaching the cars we set off for Freda's lovely nearby home to partake of our lunches. Freda had hot and cold refreshments and scrumptious cakes set up on her front verandah; many, many thanks for your hospitality Freda.

A wonderful way to end the walk; a walk which initially looked like it might be a disaster but turned out to be a rather special walk through the rain soaked bushland, with the ever-changing curtains of mist playing in the valleys.

John Cardy

Member News – Ray Nesci

On the 5th January long time member and very regular walker Ray Nesci suffered a serious stroke while working in his nursery; the first few days were touch and go as Ray fought for his life. Ray received excellent care in the Stroke Unit at Westmead Public Hospital and later transferred to Lady Davidson at North Turramurra for ongoing rehabilitation. He is now at home and doing small jobs in the nursery, closely shadowed by his daughter. He is progressing quite well, probably aided by his level of fitness and his retained sense of humour. Those who have walked with Ray would, I am sure, be rather shocked to hear of this, for Ray was one of the fittest walkers in the Group.

Our thoughts are with you Ray, and with your family, for your swift and full recovery; we know lack of determination on your part will definitely not be a factor. We miss your cheeky quips and smiling face Ray; I need you back to drag me up those high steps and steep slopes.

John Cardy

VALE MARY REYNOLDS

(26 February 1929 to 25 January 2021)

The co-founder of this walking group, Mary Reynolds, passed away in the evening of the 25th January. Mary, despite her frail health, and with the assistance of her daughter Jane, was able to be present on 4th December last, in the Mt Wilson Village Hall; a venue for which she fought tenaciously to prevent demolition some years ago. On that day we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the formation of this walking group by Mary and the late Libby Raines. We were delighted to have her company on this rather special occasion.

As was the case with everything she became involved with, Mary was passionate about the Bushwalking Group. She constantly encouraged people to join the group so that they would gain an appreciation and love for the natural environment around Mt Wilson and beyond.

Images I have of Mary on the various walks was her absolute delight when she came across

uncommon plants. Plants such as the *Atkinsonia ligustrina* in flower (named after Louisa Atkinson who she admired greatly; an early explorer, botanist, artist, author and the first female journalist in Australia). Or the *Leptospermum macrocarpum* displaying its prominent cream or reddish flowers and large metallic looking seed capsules. Also impressed on my memory is Mary sitting, elfin-like, on a stump, a log or a rock, writing notes about the walk or identifying plants from the couple of small reference books she always carried with her. The elfin-like description of Mary is not only confined to her diminutive physical size but to her mischievous persona; she loved to 'stir the possum'.

Mary produced and distributed this newsletter for nineteen years with the report writing shared with Libby. Mary wrote a footnote message following the report on the March 2009 walk as follows:

"My warm gratitude for the generous comments about my recent 80th birthday. It was a delightful celebration from my family and my good friends of Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine and the Bushwalking Group.

It also marks my retirement from the production of the Bushwalking Newsletter with which, in its variety of forms, I have been involved since May 1990. It has been a special privilege over those years.

*It is now entirely in the hands of John Cardy --
-----ably assisted by Helen Cardy, a great organiser."*

Mary hung up her walking boots in 2005 but continued as an "armchair walker" and an honorary life member.

Perhaps Mary's spirit is now exploring bushwalking tracks in another place; one can imagine they would be rather picaresque adventures. I was going to end this by saying Rest In Peace Mary, but, as in life, I can't imagine Mary's spirit resting for a moment.

John Cardy

OUR MARCH WALK

Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group

FRIDAY 19th MARCH 2021

Spectacular Valley and Ridge Top Views

Ikara Ridge to Ikara Head, off Victoria Falls Road at Mount Victoria

The group last undertook this walk in August 2016. This is a relatively easy walk of about 6 kms return with great views into the Upper Grose Gorge with possible native flowers on show; perhaps a few pink flannel flowers.

Meet at Victoria Falls Road just off the Great Western Highway, about 1km east of Mt Victoria, at 10.00am. Those wishing to car share from Mt Wilson meet at St Georges Church for a 9.30am departure. A vehicle rationalisation will be made at the Victoria Falls Road meeting point.

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 16th April 2021 – Hat Hill to Anvil Rock and the Wind-eroded Cave at Blackheath

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 12th March – Queens Avenue

Mt Wilson contact Alice Simpson 0414 425 511 or 4756 2110

Council contact Tracy Abbas 0428 777 141