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NEWSLETTER APRIL 2019

LITTLE FOREST PLATEAU TRIP

This was the first time that group members travelled to this area but probably the overnight arrangement made it difficult for some. Nevertheless, it was enjoyed by the participants and proved an excellent work-out. Pauline and Celia describe the two walks undertaken.

PIGEON HOUSE MOUNTAIN

On the first weekend in autumn, the Southern Tablelands Group went for its initial walks for 2019 on an overnight trip to the South Coast. The focus was the Budawang Range—a spectacular sculptured range of mountains, escarpments and gorges, which defines the boundary between the Southern Tablelands and the South Coast.

The varied geology, landforms, altitude and climatic conditions within the range supports a very large variety of vegetation types including forest and woodland, extensive areas of heath land and several types of rainforest tucked away in secluded gullies.

On Saturday we went to the iconic Pigeon House Mountain, so named by Captain Cook in April 1770 as he sailed north along the east coast of Australia. The local Yuin people had another name for the landmark, Didthul; the Aboriginal reference to female anatomy may have been too risqué for Cook's contemporaries. Interestingly, Surveyor General, Major Mitchell later insisted on the use of local Aboriginal names to assist with communication and orientation of later travellers.

The group started out early in order to beat the heat of the day. This turned out to be a fortunate decision as the walk is a popular one, and by the time we were heading down the mountain we passed a constant stream of hikers. As the average age of our group was probably double that of the others we met, there was a general sense of satisfaction that we hadn't done too badly to get up the 665 metres to the summit. This feeling increased as we saw how the younger generation puffed and panted. One beefy bloke who confided to Celia that he wasn't sure he could make it, was told "If I can do it, you can". One can't help but feel that he was haunted by that comment all the way to the top, and back down.

Fortunately, plant spotting gave us excellent reasons to take regular breathers. We made the most of this rationale. The

species mix varies greatly with altitude and landforms. The initial, heavily timbered slopes contained a number of specimens in flower including *Prostanthera saxicola* var. *montana* and a very pretty little blue flower discovered to be *Pseuderanthemum variabile*, also charmingly known as Love Flower. The standout tree was the *Corymbia gummifera* (Bloodwood)—with its rough grey, jigsaw shaped bark, giving way to warm, salmon coloured patches where the outer layers had been scraped away. Other species included *Corymbia maculata* (Spotted Gum) along with *E. sieberi* and *E. punctata*.

A very welcome, though short, stretch of flat walking gave some relief. *Lambertia formosa* was found to be flowering from this point upwards.

All too soon the flat gave way to further upward climb. Occasional glimpses of the peak were the only indication of how far we had come. The final stretch, using the ladders was actually the easiest of the walk, as they have been much improved since the majority of walkers last visited between 25-40 years ago. Panoramic views at the top were breathtaking. And even that exposed rocky cap was home to mallee woodlands including Eucalypts and Banksias. A host of butterflies also seemed to have made the summit home, as well as a young family of Currawongs.

The descent also offered challenges, with muscles straining to control the downward plunge. By the time the car park was reached we were all fairly tired but satisfied at having met the challenge.

It was decided to have lunch at Yadboro Flats. My memories from 40 years ago, of family picnics by an icy cold and secluded river didn't quite match the hoard of weekend visitors with their modern-day camping accoutrements. We did manage to find a semi-secluded spot near the river for lunch, but it was quite clear there was no turning back the clock.

The drive out was also full of interest, especially for Ash, Greg and Pauline who took an impromptu scenic drive along the fascinating Clyde Ridge Road. The gullies near Yadboro were brimming with *Livistona australis* (Cabbage tree palms) and a dense understory of stunning tree ferns and climbers. Further along the ridge was much drier forest, with the land dropping precipitately away from the road, first along the seaward side, and later on the western side, offering spectacular vistas. (Pauline)

Little Forest Plateau – Mt Bushwalker track

After the marathon challenge the day before, our 8km return, medium-classed walk, along Mt Bushwalker track was a doddle.

This interesting walk presented a diverse range of topographies from the tall woodland at the start, through low and tall heath, and over damp areas protected by boardwalks and round wooden stumps, to many rock platforms and cool bowers of tall banksias and other shrubs. The track cut through thick vegetation and the only break when we could get off the track occurred on the sandstone outcrops. At one point the track crossed a small stream which was running over a wide rocky outcrop before trickling over a cliff. About half way along as the path veered close to the plateau's edge we had fantastic views over the Clyde gorge and the start of the Budawang range. The track ended in a spectacular panorama of the Budawangs with the Pigeon House peak at one end stretching to the Castle massif at the other extreme.

Most flowering plants along the track were low ones apart from the taller *Lambertia formosa* (Mountain devil) and *Persoonia sp.* On the wetter areas *Drosera spathulata* (Common sundew) and *Utricularia sp.* (Fairy aprons) were sitting prettily in the mud. Pink *Stylidium lineare* (Narrow-leaved trigger plant) were dotted along the path as was the small white flowered *Mitrasacme polymorpha* (Mitre weed). In the heath areas flowering plants were *Cryptandra ericoides* (Heath cryptandra) and *Epacris microphylla* (Coral heath). There was an extensive show of flowering *Baeckea brevifolia* (Short-leaved Baeckea) mostly over the sandstone outcrops.

Although it was a hot day there were only some parts that were open heath where we were exposed to the sun, but because we were close to the escarpment there was always a coolish breeze blowing. On our return down the mountain we called into the lookout near the park entrance where we had a fantastic view of the coastline from Point Perpendicular in the north to Termeil in the south. (Celia)

(Some photos taken on this walk - next newsletter - ed)

PROPAGATION MARCH 14

This session was again held at Bob and Celia's property at Parkesbourne and a range of around twenty interesting plants were the subjects. Among these were *Grevillea barklyana*, *Persoonia recedens*, *Micromyrtus ciliata* and *Derwentia perfoliata*. Fingers crossed, of course, for the success of these cuttings. Thanks to all who were able to help.

WETLANDS GARDENS SIGNAGE

Earlier this year, Pauline proposed signage for each of the four wetlands gardens. These would be of a permanent kind and would serve to interpret the role and composition of the flora in each garden for the benefit of visitors.

Key plant species and their characteristics are focused on for each of the gardens. The striking features and functions of key plants in each garden are highlighted along with emphasis on the faunal-attracting properties of many of the species planted.

Following consultation with the FROGS, the signs with the text as composed by Pauline will be made and installed. It seems that the FROGS are also planning other signs. All of this information on display will be a boon for the inquisitive visitor.

WETLANDS WORKING BEE

Planting was the main activity on this day as the weed situation is not a major issue at present. Sixty-five plants were put in the ground and of course did receive an excellent watering late last week. Most of the plants came from the Autumn plant sales put on by the Canberra Regions ANPS at the Botanic Gardens; a small number of plants came from the group.

Among the species used were *Grevillea curviloba var. incurva*, *Persoonia oxycoccoides*, *Bauera sessiflora* and *Hibbertia procumbens*. Pauline and her co-workers were happy with what was achieved on the day.

CALENDAR MATTERS

Publicity for the July forum will be in place fairly soon. A variety of media will be used as well as the contacts used in the past two years by Bob. Attendees will be required to register with us and members will be informed before the general public. We have to set a limit on the numbers as the cost to us for the event is based on the number attending. We do expect significant interest in the forum.

Two calendar events have been swapped and are shown in red below. The reason for this is that one of the two locations to be visited in the Dalton trip will be essentially grassland and would be best viewed when new growth should be on display in Spring.

CALENDAR

Sat Apr 6	Walk - Gillindich Reserve
Sat May 25	Mt Annan Facilities
Sat Jun 8	Walk - Towrang/Cookbundoon
Sat Jul 6	Presentation/Forum
Sat Aug 3	Walk - Alison Hone Reserve
Sat Sep 7	Walk - Ettrema Gorge area
Sat Sep 19	Propagation
Sun Sep 22	Propagation
Sat Oct 5	Walk - Dalton Reserves
Wed Oct 16	Wetlands working bee
Sun Nov 3	Riversdale plant stall
Sat Nov 16	Walk - Penrose State Forest
Sat Dec 7	AGM + end of year function