

Wednesday Walk - Gambles Travelling Stock Reserve and Sutton Woodland Reserve - 21 August 2019

The plan was a quick walk through the mainly flat Gambles Travelling Stock Reserve (TSR) (it being quite small at about seven hectares) then on to the Sutton Woodland Reserve. How wrong could I have been. The TSR turned out to be an absolute delight for the dozen Wednesday Walkers who ventured into the unknown.

It is located beside Sutton Road, some six kilometres south of the village of Sutton in NSW just over the ACT border. There was a severe weather warning issued the evening before but given the sheltered area that we would be rambling through, we took a chance. Our gamble paid off handsomely. WWers have not visited here before, but with each step we were pleasantly surprised by our discoveries.

My first impression was the number of magnificent old growth trees. There were *Eucalyptus bridgesiana*, *E macrorhyncha*, *E mannifera*, *E melliodora* and *E rubida*. With large trunks, massive heights and broad canopies we were overwhelmed by their presence. It was as if time had stood still in this plot of land compared with the surrounding countryside.

The European history of the Sutton area stems from the late 1820s comprising scattered settlements running sheep and cattle. Sutton Road was gazetted in 1865 and became the main road between Queanbeyan to Collector. Cobb and Co coaches ran three times a week from Gundaroo to Queanbeyan passing through Sutton including alongside the now named Gambles TSR. As the European presence increased, most of the land came under clove-hoofed assaults forsaking the gentle bounding of kangaroos.

By far, the predominant understorey is *Cassinia hewsoniae* with a sprinkling of *Styphelia triflora* and *Melichrus urceolatus*, the latter displaying their white urn-shaped flower buds. We crossed a low-level dry patch of Amungula Creek that bisects the TSR and soon took time out for morning tea. Resuming our walk, we reached the western fence line and a heartwarming sign indicating the land on the other side of the fence was a Wildlife Refuge. Once again, the predominant understorey was *Cassinia hewsoniae*.

Continuing south we were pleasantly surprised to find many *Lissanthe strigosa* displaying clusters of pink buds, sometimes nearly red in colour. There were quite a few patches of them, some of which were showing off their small white flowers. We also found quite a number of *Microseris lanceolata*, the discovery of which prompted us to ponder the history of this land. Was this a stopping point for local aborigines who lived around Lake George over winter then travelled up to the Monaro high country in early summer?

As we turned eastwards, we stopped beside the deeply eroded creek for lunch. It was perfect. Water in the creek, stately trees, flowering *Acacia dealbata*, birds twittering amongst the branches, flitting in and out of holes in the creek cliffs. And then we spied it — surely it was an Aboriginal scar tree. I felt an intense sense of history there. What have these trees witnessed? What stories could they tell?

Time to move on. There was not much in flower and our progress was slow as we debated the identities of a number of plants, some displaying just one or two leaves. With the help of our very own Jean Egan, local orchid expert, our list grew to include *Bulbine bulbosa*, *Diplodinium truncatum*, *Eriochilus cucullatus* and *Wurmbea dioica*. Other plants were *Cryptandra amara* var *longifolia*, *Glycine tabacina*, *Geranium* sp, *Leptospermum multicaule* and *Ranunculus* sp.

I could go on, but time calls. Needless to say, we thoroughly enjoyed Gambles TSR. Spring would be a lovely time to visit, but also autumn when the *Diplodinium truncatum* would be in flower. That would be a sight, given the number we found.

Sutton Woodland Reserve

We then drove about six kilometres north to visit the Sutton Woodland Reserve. This is totally different — undulating, a lot of grass underfoot, not much understorey. There were thick patches of weeds including Serrated Tussock, Blackberry and Vinca and rolls of barbed wire. A local has had a grazing lease on the Reserve for many years but doesn't seem to have used it lately. The Reserve had a distinct look of neglect.

Once again we found *Aristida ramosa*, *Bulbine bulbosa*, *Lissanthe strigosa*, *Lomandra filiformis* and *L multiflora* but also *Astrodanthonia* sp, *Austrostipa bigeniculata*, *Cassinia arcuata* and *Dianella revoluta*. Trees included *Eucalyptus mannifera*, *E melliodora* and *E rubida*. However there was one that stumped us until Kris declared it to be a hybrid: a cross between *E dives* and *E bridgesiana*. It had the baby leaves of both trees and the seed capsules of *E bridgesiana*). There was also a lovely stand of *Exocarpus cupressiformis* on the northern edge of the Reserve.

We decided to finish early and answer the call of the Sutton Baker. Chatting over cups of coffee and tea, we all agreed Gambles TSR was a treasure and being so close to town we are sure that we will be visiting it again.

Gail Ritchie Knight

Gambles Travelling Stock Reserve



The TSR had much of interest KN



Acacia dealbata (L) & *Cassinia hewsoniae* (R)



Cassinia hewsoniae



Melichrus urceolatus



Lissanthe strigosa buds



Cryptandra amara flowers



Amungula Creek



Creek bank



Eucalyptus bridgesiana



Aboriginal scar tree (?)



Woodland along the creek



Orchid – next time I'll pay more attention KN

Sutton Woodland Reserve



Sutton woodland



Dianella revoluta



Eucalyptus bridgesiana juvenile
leaves



Scleranthus sp



Termite mound



Excoparpus cupressiformis