

Armidale Bushwalkers



Armidale Bushwalking Club Newsletter No 13 Winter 2008

www.armidalebushwalkers.org phone 6775-2026

ABC Syndicate Track walk 11 May 2008

To taste the coastal air, and a bit of history, Armidale bushwalkers met Coffs Harbour bushwalkers to follow the Syndicate Ridge Track along the escarpment and down to the ruins of the historic Syndicate Tramway. For the first few kilometres of Slingsbys Trail we walked across the Killungoondie Plain, an area



Peter and Paul

that has been cleared for generations by Aboriginal burning and European settlement (now evidencing regrowth of Blackwood Wattles, White Banksias and Casuarinas). Numerous crossings of Wild Cattle Creek reminded us of how pristine tablelands waters should look, sound and taste, and how many must have appreciated such a wonderful water source.

Our entrance into the cool rainforest of the escarpment was made easy indeed by the fact that we were walking on old logging tracks – wide, reasonably level and hewn from rock - to accommodate the bullock and horse teams that hauled mostly cedar and hoop pine from the forests from the 1880s until the 1930s. As we made our way to Lanes Lookout and Stony

Creek Lookout along the escarpment, we found ourselves in cool temperate forests with remnants of warm temperate forest species: cedar, coachwood, tallow, corkwood, callicoma and hoop pine, still majestic and inspiring us to imagine whole forests of them! Dorrigo White Gum and Ribbon Gum are always a point of interest, as walkers continue to identify the differences – mostly by the smooth white trunk of the former. The lookouts themselves afford expansive views over Bellingen and the Bellinger River, across to Urunga and the Pacific, directly east to Picketts Mountain and further west to Mt Gladstone. A foot track zigzags down to meet the old Syndicate Tramway, built around 1910 by the Bellingen Timber Company, a syndicate of local businessmen, to transport mostly hoop pine (logs strapped to trolleys on the tramway) from the top of the escarpment to the bottom mills near Glennifer. While its possible to follow the tramway ruins right down, we choose to follow the tramway back up the mountain – it's a steep but short climb – to find buried sleepers and wooden tramlines, the occasional wheel and a Bullwheel that controlled the towing cables. John Sayer from Coffs Harbour kindly made available some detailed notes and pictures of life and logging in the area, which were most informative. We found that it takes about 2 hours to walk in to the escarpment, an hour walking along it for the views and the tramway ruins, then about 2 hours to walk back along the old logging tracks to the gate at Slingsbys Road. It's an impressive walk, full of natural beauty and historical interest.

Tia Falls and Apsley Falls walk Sunday 6 April

Armidale Bushwalkers are usually more concerned to enjoy a gourmet view than a



gourmet lunch, but a recent day walk to Tia Falls and Apsley Falls combined the two experiences very enjoyably. From Armidale, it's possible to travel the 60km to Walcha, spend the morning walking around Tia Falls, the afternoon walking around Apsley Falls, and still have time for a long lunch in between. It's worth noting that the upgraded viewing platforms, walkways and steps around Tia/Apsley, the barbecues and facilities are first rate, which makes all the above possible.

Gourmet views are still on the menu at Tia and Apsley Falls. Whether the view is familiar or new, the spectacle of water falling some 150 m into these gorges of the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park is always astonishing - to John Oxley in 1818, and astonishing to us

now. Apsley Falls are the first falls in a succession of gorges in the Oxley Wild Rivers area, and two walks afford different view of the river as it falls from different heights and meanders around the escarpment: the Oxley Walk (2.7km) reveals a second lower waterfall, the Gorge Rim Walk (1km) shows the magnitude of the waterfall and cliff faces. Tia Falls won the waterfall stakes this time, though, and from the shorter Falls Walk (1.5km) on the eastern side of the gorge, the view was impressive. The longer Tiara Walk around the western side (5km) is recommended, as changing views, colours and perspectives of this incredible gorge do build an unforgettable impression.

Gara Gorge Walk

by Peter Laffan

Present:- David Lawrence, Peter Quinn
ABC met at the Information Centre at 8.00am. Left at 8.20 and proceeded to "the Carriages" on "Silverton". This is on the Gara road, approximately 8km east on the Coffs road.

From the carriages we walked in a south-westerly direction for 1km till the Gorge came into view. We decided to descend to the river floor via one of the gullies running NE/SW. The local name is the "Black Gully". After a steep descent of approximately 200m we found ourselves on the river, which was flowing higher than normal, so movement was restricted to rock hopping and some scrub scrambling. A decision to walk upstream to view the remains of the hydro scheme was made, so more large boulders and jumbled rock falls were negotiated to reach the outfall pool of the old power station. Very little remains - bolts into the rock face where a stairway lead to the gorge top, large posts for

some structural purpose, housings for generators and/or turbines, some rail-lines near the penstock, concrete blocks for shed uprights – all covered with ivy, creepers and stinging nettles (guess who wore shorts!).

David found a plant species not recorded in this section of the gorge, so spent time photographing and collecting whilst the Peter's enjoyed the beautiful weather, the isolation and contemplated the walk downstream.

The group agreed to walk to a time limit downstream to explore through the boulder field. The rock hopping was constant with lots of jumping gaps, balancing on rock edges trying to judge the required path keeping in mind the momentum needed to go forward. The granite was dry, as water levels had obviously been higher, so the algal slime was dried and hence not slippery.

We proceeded to a drop of many metres where the river split into two waterfalls, deeming this to be a good snack spot. A cliff line here was descended after a while, allowing us to venture further down. A few more tricky paths were made until we found ourselves stuck between a large drop downstream, thick and steep scrub bashing on the eastern bank, and unable to find a safe crossing to attempt the western bank (which looked negotiable).

Lunch was agreed upon back at the hydro penstock end so upstream we wound.

After discussing all manner of topics we set off directly up the old penstock. Underfoot was very crumbling rock and debris so we all trod carefully. At this point David suggested that the walk category should be revised somewhat! Once on top of the gorge we found ourselves on the Threfall walk, near lookout. A relatively quick stroll along the path, across the boundary fence and through paddocks to the north east led us back to the car at the "Carriages". All in all a very pleasant day out. Thanks to David and Peter.

Poem by Peter Rodger

Far from this world of bling
 Down where casuarinas sing
 A little piece Of foam lies all alone
 For it's a thong you see
 And how it came to be
 Is now to be the subject of this poem
 It was borrowed one fine morn
 And intended to be worn
 By robin on her walk at end of day
 'Twas at the apslby junction
 Where we had stopped foe luncheon
 That she noticed it had fallen by the way
 Though from her pack it slid
 T'wasn't worth the effort to retrieve
 For likely it did settle
 In some patch of stinging nettle
 So robin was now left alone to grieve
 When the river waters rise
 From flood rains from the skies
 The little piece of foam will float away
 Where Macleay it meets the sea
 It may yet again be free
 To live once more and see another day

Foot note (PUN INTENDED!)

The background to this little ditty relates to an event on David's Macleay River walk. Robyn had borrowed partner, Peter's, thongs for end of day wear at camp. However, on the second last day of the walk she had fixed the extra footwear to the outside of her pack - sadly, however, not securely enough.

Amongst all the flippant suggestions from her fellow walkers, such as hopping around on one foot that evening, there emerged the suggestion that the event should be enshrined in words.

Giant Panda Snail

By *Kathy King*

Some Armidale Bushwalkers would have seen this snail on our walks in Washpool and Gibraltar National Parks and on our Hyatt's Flat walk along the Styx River near New England National Park this year. It is the largest land snail in Australia and is found mainly in rainforests in SE Queensland and Northern NSW. Its shell can be 70 mm in



Giant Panda Snail

diameter.

We saw it mainly as an empty shell but on our Washpool walk last year we did find a snail at home. There's not a lot known about it though it is mainly active at night and finds shelter during the day. It has been seen eating fungi of which there are myriads of kinds in rainforest. On our Gibraltar walk in February this year Paul noticed a little snail shell within the large one – probably a completely different species of snail but it rather looked as if it was looking for a new home and trying the big one out for size.

Guide for walks leaders.

**About 500 words
with photos please.**

**The following is a guide for
walks leaders for story for
newsletter**

- **Leader**
- **Number of walkers and names (check with those in walk if OK to use their names.)**
 - **Weather**
 - **Area walking in**
 - **Description of walk eg. Terrain any water, flora and fauna, good lookouts etc.**
 - **Walk ending coffee shop?**

Inverell Bushwalking Club

Warialda Creek-Cranky Rock to Fishponds Saturday/Sunday 20/ 21 May 2006

By Bill Dempsey

This walk was programmed as an easy backpacking trip and a good one for beginners. It turned out to be a little harder than expected, however the extra effort expended was more than compensated for by the numerous and varied attractions that abound along this twelve kilometre stretch of the Warialda Creek.

There are few if any places in this part of the State where a two day backpacking trip will afford you such natural wonders as Cranky Rock, Bubbling Springs, Chinamans Leap and

the Fishponds Gorge. Throw in some huge sandstone rock formations, beautiful granite rock pools, an old mining shaft, one of the biggest Moreton Bay fig trees in the district, a basaltic dyke across the creek, an old homestead in ruins and a smaller gorge on Spring Creek and you have it all.

Bill Dempsey led this walk and it was probably the first backpacking trip ever into this area (maybe the Chinaman camped a night or two during his escapade years ago!). He was joined by Peter Emerson, Mick O'Brien and Ian Smith.

On a glorious autumn day, the party set out at 8.30 am from Cranky Rock just east of Warialda. Not a bad point to start a walk and anyone who has visited this popular spot would agree, you would readily walk for a whole day just to get to such a unique attraction.

Immediately upstream there are some lovely rock pools, plenty of bottlebrush in full bloom and the walking really is quite easy along the bank of the creek. Four kilometres. Cranky Rock, Spring — Creek enters Warialda Creek on the left. Most club members have walked the length of Spring Creek and will recall the mini gorge that stretches almost to the Myalla gateway on the Warialda/Gragin road.

For the next two kilometres and just off the left bank, very high sandstone cliff faces are the main feature. This band of rock leaves the creek then it eventually flows back against the same. At this point we left the Warialda Creek and headed north east for two kilometres to where a high ridge of spectacular sand stone rock formations stretch east to west for over a kilometre. Some of the rock has eroded to unusual formations that can stand up to twenty metres high and are in banded colours from white through to pink, orange and red. It makes for some spectacular photography with

the sun on all the rich colours.

One of these formations was the home to a native bees nest and it is still possible to see some of the honeycomb hanging from an undercut in the rock. It is also quite easy to walk up onto the top of the rock and out to the front edge from which point vehicles could be seen travelling that stretch of the Gwydir Highway between Koloona and Tigers Gap.

This area alone deserves further exploration as this colourful sandstone belt extends a long way west of where we stood. Furthermore, an old fence line still stands in this vicinity and is unique in that the steel posts are spiral. The original Warialda/Gragin mail road is also a short distance to the north.

About a kilometre further east and atop a sandstone ridge stands possibly the largest Moreton Bay fig tree in the Gwydir Shire - if you know where to look, the same is quite discernable about seven kilometres "as the crow flies" from the Gwydir Highway and at that point where the Gwydir and Inverell Shire boundaries meet. It is beyond my geographical knowledge to suggest that the tree might create its own climate but it certainly provides its own nutrients with the leaf litter around its base many metres deep in places. It really is a great sight with the grey of the main root system cascading over the front of a five metre high, orange sandstone rock face.

Next port of call was to return to the Warialda Creek to look for a campsite and what better place to pitch a tent than beside a good hole of water on the creek and just below a small spring fed waterfall and rock pool on a small creek coming in on the left.

Certainly a great day's walk and a sample of Ian Smith's "Scotch Brew" around the campfire that night topped off a pleasant evening to boot.

Sunday morning dawned and the weather looked like being a repeat of Saturday's -

warm, one cloud and hardly a breeze.

First stop was to visit the old homestead on the property "Fishponds". Sadly the place is falling down and what used to be a full verandah is now little more than a pile of timber with only the stumps remaining. The main structure is still intact, however some of the roofing iron is starting to lift and as Ian suggested "that is the sign of a building on its last legs". One can only wonder what history still exists within what remains of the walls of this building!

About three hundred metres away the old woolshed is little more than a pile of rubble on the ground. About ten years ago it was largely intact and was unique in that it had a dirt floor and low walls extending to the same. About half a kilometre south of the woolshed used to stand the shearers quarters and once again, ten years ago it stood as one large room on tall stumps - today, little or nothing remains.

In the immediate area is another outstanding feature known as Chinamans Leap. This is an eighty metre high, vertical rock face that extends in a straight line for about two hundred metres. Once again, if you know where to look, the same can be seen some four kilometres in the distance from the Delungra/Gragin Road and about one kilometre south of the slab across the creek. The same would make a great venue for a Western with a few Indian teepees pitched on the flat foreground.

Traditionally, local people generally believe that "the cranky Chinaman" leapt to his death off Cranky Rock, giving rise to its name. Former club member Chris Bone was interested enough some years ago to research the old court records in the Warialda Court House and with the help of local historian Merv Williamson, was able to determine that he, in fact, most likely met his demise at the base of this rock face. One of the club's very early

Newsletters tells the tale and Chris even suggested his name was Lee Ping (tongue in cheek!)

You don't have to walk too much further up the creek to reach the Shire Boundary and at this point the beautiful rocky pools known as Bubbling Springs greet you. Here, there and wherever, there is a constant stream of bubbles coming to the surface of the water. No one seems to know their source or their constitution, however old-timers say they were bubbling away when they were kids and their grandfathers told them it was the same in their early clays.

Upstream from Bubbling Springs the water holes get bigger, the scenery changes quite dramatically and the points of interest are numerous.

The first feature is a basaltic dyke about half a metre in width and extending in a straight line directly across the granite creek bed - if someone had asked a bricklayer to lay a bed of bricks across the creek, he could not have done a neater job than the one Mother Nature has done at this site.

Around the next bend is the start of a narrow and quite spectacular gorge that houses some beautiful granite swimming holes amongst many large boulders. It is impossible to walk the full length of the gorge without having to swim one or two of the granite pools and on this occasion it was elected to climb out of the same and onto the next level of the creek.

Once out of the gorge and upstream where the creek drops into the same, we crossed over onto the left bank and checked out the old mining tunnel and the shaft that serviced the same. The tunnel goes into the hillside for about fifty metres and a shaft near the top of the hill drops about fifteen metres directly down to the same.

Former Warialda raconteur, the late Reg

Moore acknowledged that the railway tracks for the town's Apex Club train came out of the mine but was unsure of what was mined. Mick had good reason to believe that it was arsenic mine and that the shaft at the top of the hill was in fact required to extract the smoke from the tunnel

Back onto the creek and the last three kilometres of the walk to the Delungra/Gragin slab was a mixture of long, deep pools of water, another small gorge and some easy walking through open bushland.

At the end of the walk Bill's wife Marie and a welcome six-pack of "cold gold" greeted the party.

This really is a great two-day walk that could in fact be extended into three or four days to allow for further exploration. It could also be walked in reverse. Another variation could be to start at the top end of Spring Creek rather than Cranky Rock.

Maybe next year.

Oven Camp Backpack

Overview: There is a lack of detailed notes on overnight bushwalks in the Armidale-Walcha region, particularly those which do not require permission from a landowner to access them. There are also few places with a choice of farmstays nearby, with the local knowledge (and comforts!) that implies.

Access to this Oxley Wild Rivers National Park trip is via public and Crown roads. The area has a number of homestays which could be used at the start and end of the trip- Karori, Tabletop Retreat, Cheyenne and Arran Eco farmstays are all within easy driving distance.

The trip includes a long ridge descent, then a beautiful campsite beside a big wild river. The next day starts with easy river walking, followed by a long climb up to a spectacular

viewpoint and campsite. The final day begins with sunrise over one of the great views of the New England, then a traverse of Tabletop Mountain's grassy woodland, and ends with an easy walk along firetrails back to the cars.

Thus the trip includes some of the main elements of New England walking.

It is planned to do the first exploratory trip in May or June this year, after extensive consultation with locals. Suggestions for variations of the route below are welcome.

(Contact David Lawrence 67753164; davidlawrence2@bigpond.com)

Newsletter Insert

Walk Type	Approx Daily Km.	Terrain Fitness
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DW- One Day WalkBP (3d2n) – Backpack, 3 days, 2 nights	CC (2d2n)- Car Camp, 2 days, 2 nights	S - Short - Less than 10km
Medium - 10-15 km	L - Long - 15-20 km	XL - Extra Long - over 20 km
1 - Graded track, some incline	2 - Graded track, hills, creek crossings	3 - Rough track, steep sections, creek crossings
4 - Off track, moderate terrain	5 - Off track, thick terrain	6 - Rock climbing and exposure
A - Low fitness	B - Moderate fitness	C - Good fitness
D - Good fitness with agility	E - High fitness level	F - Strenuous - experienced walkers only!

Exploratory Three Day Backpack- BP(3d2n) L 5 E (5E=the off-road section, Day1; remainder 3C-D)

This circular walk starts and ends beside Karori entrance ramp. We'll descend about 800 metres down Oven Camp Ridge to Oven Camp on the Macleay on the first day- a long day! Day Two will start with a leisurely walk on the Macleay with some river crossings, then a long pull of about 800 metres up to camp on the saddle between Tabletop Mountain and The Cocks Comb. After catching the view from Cocks Comb East, we'll climb up on to Tabletop Mountain, along the summit, and

down the South ridge to easy-mostly road- walking back to the cars. Suitable for well-equipped, fit and experienced backpackers.

Directions to (Maps Salisbury Plains and Winterbourne 1:25 000)

From Armidale -20-Uralla - left onto the Walcha road- 17.5 (Grid Reference 602 928) left - 11.5 (690 888)- right onto Hazeldene road- 10-(G.R.766 864) keep to right on Hazeldene Road- 4- (G.R.806 865) keep to right-3- (G.R.831 856)- turn rt onto Winterbourne rd- 2- (G.R.825 837) -left onto Tabletop rd- 2- (G.R.845 837) -keep left on Tabletop rd-6- (G.R. 896 830 "Karori" ramp. Total distance from Armidale 76 km (about 1 hr 5 minutes)

From Walcha- (Winterbourne Road)- 24.5- (G.R.825 837)- turn right onto Tabletop Road - 2- (G.R. 845 837) -keep left on Tabletop rd-6- (G.R. 896 830 "Karori" ramp) . Total distance from Walcha about 33 km (say 30 minutes).

Park cars here on Crown road. Leave cars, carry 3-day backpack

Day 1 (W) = "Winterbourne 9236-2- N; (RC) = "Rowleys Creek 9236-2-S LegKm
TotalKm LegHrMin

E. along left side of fence, then thru fence to Crossroads Camp (RC) 917 827

2.00 2.00 0.30

NE on road to Map edge (RC) 930 836

1.75

3.75 0.30

Continue past Reedy Creek Falls, then +/- N on road (W)953 868 -road junction

5.25 9.00 1.30

Continue +/- N on road to 964 884(leave rd-careful navigation needed>)

2.00

11.00 0.30

More or less E, N on stream divide to local high pt at 978 890

1.50 12.50 0.40

Follow Oven Camp Ridge to local high point at 005 887

2.70

15.20 1.30

Carefully take ridge bearing N then E to Kunderang Yard Creek 026 897

3.50

18.70 1.30

Follow down KY Creek to Oven Camp on Macleay at 032 908

Camp

1.30 **20.00** 0.15 **T6.55**

77Day 2 (W) = "Winterbourne 9236-2- N LegKm
TotalKm LegHrMin

Walk up Macleay to Blue Mountain Creek junction at 990 948

7.50 7.50 3.00

Travel up BM Creek to 987 959 –HASL 330

1.50

9.00 0.30

Climb spur W, SW to join other spur at 976 953 –HASL 640

1.00

10.00 0.40

Walk up spur S to dam on rt of road? at 973 937 –HASL 880

1.50 11.50 0.40

Continue on road to (W) 973 924- leave road(bear left- pick up water)

1.50 13.00 1.00

Due S to local HP (W) 971 911 ASL 960

1.30 14.30 0.30

Contour to saddle at Tabletop-Cocks Comb saddle (W) 970 905 ASL 1000 **Camp** 0.50

14.80 0.20 **T 6.40**

(Short walk NE to take in view from Cocks Comb East Point –GR 973 907- evening, morning- 1 km)

Alternative – from 973 937 –HASL 880

Continue on road to abandoned hut at 959 904 –HASL 1000 (WATER?)

6.00

17.50 2.00

Climb NE then SE to summit Tabletop Mountain at 966 903 –HASL 1135 **Camp**

0.80

18.30 0.30 **T 7h 20m**

Day 3 (W) = “Winterbourne 9236-2- N

LegKm

TotalKm LegHrMin

Climb onto Tabletop Mtn (TTOCOXSTAR 96699 90448)

0.40

0.40 0.30

Walk S along mountain top, down spur to road at (W) 963 895

1.30

1.70 0.40

Walk S on road to (W)953 868 -road junction

3.00

4.70 1.00

Continue L on road to Map edge (RC/W) 930 836

5.25

10.00 1.30

SW on road to Crossroads Camp (RC) 917 827

1.75 11.75 0.30

Thru fence, then W. along right side of fence to (RC) 896 830 “Karori” ramp

2.00

13.75 0.30**T 4.40**