

Armidale Bushwalkers



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A Walk in the Black Scrub

From the escarpment of New England National Park, there are three routes down into



the Bellinger valley . One is the magical trip from Point Lookout via Robinsons Knob and Grasstree Ridge. Another is Tysons Track, which several of us can also recommend. Then there's the Black Scrub ridge.

Try putting 'The Black Scrub Road NSW' into Google Maps, and you will see it marked clearly at the same level as the Darkwood- Thora road. On Google Earth, it's similarly to Tysons Road. Wouldn't that make you feel pretty confident, having walked Tysons, that it would be easily negotiable?

Well, four of us recently found that it isn't. It was no trouble getting across to the top of Black Scrub ridge. The start looked very steep

on the contour maps, but we took it easy, and there were plenty of trees to grab and steady one's descent. We lost GPS reception, but hey, we were on the correct ridge, we'd done the hard bit, and we'd soon run into the road, wouldn't we?

After another couple of hours, we hadn't. We'd seen what seemed to be a bits of track, but where the road should have been there was an immense tangle of vines, variously hooked, barbed and thorned. We grimly battled along the ridge, till tiredness and the impending darkness saw us camping on one of the flatter, but no more open sections. We had a

good chat around the fire- we'd found a fallen old Eucalypt among the otherwise dense rainforest- and hoped for better progress on the morrow.

The morning dawned fine, and with renewed



energy we left at 7.30 . We stayed on the big ridge, climbed a knoll, and with the knowledge that we soon had to take a spur down to the left, floundered around through very thick regrowth till Paul and Peter caught a glimpse of tall white Eucalypts through a gap in the rainforest. We



View to die for ~ Darkwood

headed back towards them, and soon after came on a definite 4WD road. It was long unused, it was overgrown, but it was on the exact compass bearing we needed. Soon after, the GPS picked up reception confirming we were just where we should have been.

After a leisurely morning break, and a steep descent through the tall Eucalypt forest, we could see the open valley below us. There was still a last obstacle- a thick band of Lantana . We abandoned trying to find an open route, and just bashed and barged our way till we more or less fell out onto the open paddock beside Bishops Creek.

We had permission to camp at a friend's place, and were delighted to find him at home. Mark bustled around, showed us a good campsite by the water, and brought us some firewood and an axe. A long leisurely lounge by the fire was very welcome after the day's privations. Peter had tangled with a Giant Stinging Tree, and was in some discomfort- what less individuals would call real pain- while all of us carried whip-marks from

the rainforest vines.

After breakfasting to the musical tinkle of the creek, one of us volunteered to guard our tents (while indulging in a good book and frequent coffees). The other three, having walked Tysons before, were hoping it too hadn't become 'jungled out'.

The start wasn't prepossessing- we still had to resort to Alan Went's excellent written direction to find the pop-hole into the bushes that begins Tysons Track. However, after that it was still open, and we relished its very even grade and views across to the Bellinger flats. We passed through open forest and, higher up, re-entered rainforest- still with some glimpses of Little Murray Lookout on the escarpment and Mount Gladstone towards the

coast.

As usual on clear tracks, Paul and I loafed along taking photos and trying to identify plants, while Peter kept up his even pace with no stops till the top. After pushing through the thicker scrub encroaching on the road, we slowcoaches burst into the sunlight to find Peter finishing a leisurely lunch . Politely, he didn't ask 'What took you so long', so we flopped down to eat while taking in the view. It was impressive- East across to Walmsleys Lookout, with glimpses of Dorrigo National Park and perhaps Dibbs Head in the distance. Above us was all open brilliant green grass with slashes of the brick-red dirt that makes this prime dairying country.

Back at our car, we took in the densely green Bellinger valley far below us and the sea-glimmer hazily distant. A quick trip down the mountain found Alan packed up, the fire doused, and we soon were heading back to Armidale. Perhaps our first and last visit to the Black Scrub, but not, we hope, to the Bellinger Valley and Tysons Track.

My most ambitious walk

The South-west track Tasmania

by Colin Wood

I had some trepidation about doing this walk as I know it's can be very hard with lots of mud,rain and cold, even in summer, in winter it would be impossible. I think I am quite fit, doing

wind and rain abound. One look at the angle of the heather (some call it horizontal scrub) re-enforces the tales you hear from other bush-walkers about the weather.

So I disembarked the nice warm bus and watched the driver spirit her away after picking up some poor unfortunates that had walked the other way. I must say that they looked in poor shape, "but I will be fine", I keep telling myself.

Day one saw me walking through rain forest and button grass plains. Lots of mud holes to jump; the going was quite hard. Some of the mud holes were quite deep. With a very full pack. I carry dried food some rice, pasta



Cockle Creek

lots of walks with Bankstown Bushwalkers and National Parks Assoc. I thought about Wade Butler who was lost, never to be seen again in this area.

and for lunch vita-wheat, cheese and those meat knobs (they last for ages) breakfast would be porridge with dried milk and a cuppa.

I am 61 years old and think that this is the last time I will have the opportunity to do this walk.

The Southwest Track begins at the southern end of Lake Pedder and winds its way down to Port Davey and then on to Cockle Creek at the bottom end of Tasmania. While the track doesn't climb into the alpine regions, the Roaring Forties frequent this part of the world and the



Discovery Bay ~ my footprints

The track was quite demanding with lots of log and river crossings. The water was so, so cold and always over the top of your boots. There is always arguments about crossing waterways with or without boots. I carry a pair of volleys and change to them when crossing.

The track took me through some amazingly spectacular country. The track, apart from being badly cut up, had ropes placed in the difficult areas and even a couple of rowboats at two of the deeper water crossings.

At the end of the second day I camped at a small spot on the track, as I was concerned about the number of hungry leaches that inhabited my previously planned campsite. I arrived in the dark and put my tent up on top of the button grass; I slept like there was no tomorrow. I had traveled in excess of 20km over tough terrain with a heavy pack and had little left in reserve.



Farrell Point was a day short of halfway and it is a beautiful spot to camp and contemplate the next day. The campsite is located right on the shores of Bathurst Narrows.

You depart Farrell Point by rowboat and cross the often choppy Bathurst Narrows. When finished transferring personnel and gear, one simply rows the other boat back to the other side and returns to leave a boat on either side set-up for the next walkers. This is well done and a credit to the Tasmanian National Parks staff. While I was talking about the National Parks staff, these people are the most dedicated educative park rangers I have ever met. They walk the tracks without access to vehicles and work with the walkers to educate them about minimal impact issues and the features of the parks. At South Cape Rivulet I even caught the ranger sifting through the cold ashes of the campfire I had the previous night to find and store the aluminum food packaging some walkers had thrown in the fire thinking that it would burn. No complaints from him, just a dogged determination to keep the park in pristine condition.

When I made it to Port Davey, the halfway point, I took a rest day, and enjoyed the luxury afforded by one of the huts that Denny King built for walkers.

The airstrip at Port Davey (Melaluka) is amazingly short and a fully packed Cessna with bush-walkers and packs poses a challenge of scary proportions. The aircraft taxi to the very end of the strip and swing around with all of the tail

section hanging over the edge of the strip. Under brakes they increase the throttle to maximum power before releasing the little tethered plane to take her chances at the other end of the quartz gravel runway.

Armidaale Bushwalkers built up sufficient air speed to lumber slowly up and out of sight.

I got a drop-off of food here for the rest of the walk.

From Port Davey I walked to Cox Bight and then followed the coast down from there. The rain was intermittent. Eventually I made it to Lousia River where I were confronted with a fast flowing watercourse, swelled



White Sands Camp

You watch in horrid fascination as they lumber down the strip increasing speed at what seems

with the recent rain. I had a go at crossing , but only got about a third of the way across before

the water threatened to drag me away from the rope I was holding on to. If I was in any doubt about my ability to get across that night, the warning signs around the crossing quickly dispelled that. So I



Iron Bound Range ~ on a good day

to be insufficient to get the poor overloaded bird in the air. When they reach the end of the strip the pilot gently takes the weight off the landing gear, but doesn't gain the altitude for perhaps 50 to 100 metres after the end of the strip. The wheels skim the button grass until the aircraft has

camped the night and crossed the next morning when the water had receded a bit.

Crossing the Ironbound Range was the objective for this day. This range climbs and descends 1000 metres. On the map the distance to traverse is a mere eight kilometres, but this

would be a day to remember.

When I set out the wind was blowing its usual 70 km/hr from the west, but as I climbed the temperature dropped and the wind increased. I normally walk Tasmania in a flannel shirt and shorts, but by the time I was halfway up the range, I was wearing every piece of clothing I carried. Boy it was cold! When we reached the top, the wind was incredible; you could hear the gusts as they tore up the valley, and when they burst over the top, the velocity would knock you to the ground. If you didn't hold





on to something solid, you would be pushed along the ground by the sheer force of the wind.

Down the other side of the range you could be forgiven for wondering what the fuss was all about. It was still and even hot. I were forced to take all extra warm clothes off again.

I was now traveling right beside the coast and along some of the beaches and dunes. These are spectacular the panorama was breathtaking.

South Cape Rivulet was my last night before walking out to Cockle Creek and is a beautiful spot the camp. I opted for my first intentional swim and ended up with what could be best described as an ice cream headache; the water was so cold, sorry refreshing!!

The next day I walked out.

This was a challenging trip for me and not one to be taken lightly, but if you have the time to do this trip I would highly recommend it. I did keep thinking about Wade Butler who had been lost in this area, never to be seen again, he was walking alone (like me)

Attending your first walk

- Book on a walk by calling the trip leader listed on the walks program. Let them know that you are new to the club. They will advise you of meeting arrangements and can assist with transport if required.
- Please note that when you book to go on a walk you will be gone all day, most walks will start at 8am and will not be returning to the car till at least 4pm.
- Expect the “third degree” from the leader. When you ring a leader, whom you have not walked with before, you may be asked a number of questions. The purpose of these questions is to determine as best as possible whether the walk that you are considering is the right sort of walk for you in this stage of your bushwalking career. The safety and enjoyment of you and other members of the party depends on you being open and honest in your answers.

Some questions you may be asked include:

Depending on your answers to these or other questions, leaders will give you information about the walk. Please keep in mind leaders are volunteers who give their time, energy and expertise so others can share the enjoyment of bush walking.

So when you get the “third degree” from a leader, think about the leader’s responsibility to you and other party members, and try to assist by giving accurate information in a spirit of cooperation.

Every individual planning to join, whether as a single or as part of a couple/family must complete a membership form.

Steps in becoming a member

1. Complete the membership form.
2. Upon receipt of your membership form, you will receive the Walks Programme.
4. Book on a walk by calling the trip leader listed on the walks program. Let him or her know that you are new to the club. He or she will advise you of meeting arrangements and can assist with transport if required.

The sooner you take the step of contacting a trip leader to go on your first activity the sooner you will start to benefit from the experience of our activity leaders, so don’t delay.

Join in, enjoy... go to www.armidalebushwalkers.org

Two organisations lead to the birth of Armidale Bushwalking Club. The first is Inverell Bushwalking Club, a great group of people who gave many of us some very happy memories, and the confidence to form our own club. The other is the New England Ecotourism Society. In a wish to provide outdoor activities for its members, NEES has sponsored the formation of our club. Like a good parent, NEES is supporting us in our first difficult steps, but is encouraging Armidale Bushwalking Club to become an independent organisation with its own aims and activities. I would like to acknowledge both of our “parent” organisations, and hope we maintain close relations with them as we grow up.