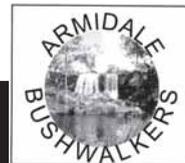


Armidale Bushwalkers



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Dandahra Walk March 18 2007

by Robyn Bartel

David Lawrence, Ellen Pinnington,
Peter Laffan, and Chris Wacker.

The day started pouring with rain

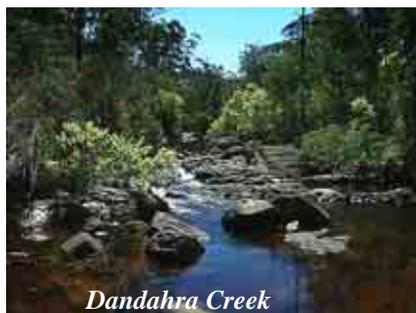
Oh no, not that again!

Cried those who could remember

The last walk by the leader

Foreshortened it ended -

Due to rain unrepentant!



Dandahra Creek

With the forecast of wet and cold
All those who called were told:
Bring change of clothes and raingear,
Be prepared for anything, do you hear?!

And so they were, the five
Prepared to succeed, not just survive!
Prepared for anything they were -

But it fined up! Weather was clear!

And to Dandahra Crags of Gibraltar
In the dry still heat they did not once
falter...

What happened to the vagaries?
Of weather promised, that could freeze
The very hardest of walker?
Just the product of a big talker?

Be not doubtful, for it came,
Steadily down it did, the rain -
For 2 whole hours after lunch

(at least it allowed us time to munch!)
The Christmas Bells, that in the
morning

Had us clicking, to capture their fine
blooming

Were ignored in the afternoon -
Our sodden boots passing them in the
gloom

Of fog and rain, but we did not
despair!

For we knew that strawberry shakes
were beckoning us there -

To Glen Innes, then on to home!

It would not be our final roam -

We survived to walk another day,
And more - prepared we were - all
the way!

Roughly 4 hours of walking and 1
hour of lunch at Dandahra Crags
(Gibraltar Range NP). Walking track
was wide and recently mown, all
intersections signposted clearly,
terrain generally easy walking, several
creek crossings, great views (and also
a few "woo" moments for heights-
minded people).

Walking distance travelled 15.8 km*
(along creek from Visitor Centre Car
Park then Dandahra Crags circuit and
return the way we came along creek).

*estimate provided by David's GPS,
thanks! And thanks to all for great
walking bonhomie.

Lyrebird and Cascades Walk in New England NP

elevation 11500 metres.

By David Lawrence

A motley crew of walkers gathered at 7 am at Armidale Visitor's Centre, a little surprised at the cool morning after an early start to avoid the heat. We caught up with the Christmas gossip, filled in waiver forms, and



sorted out cars to leave at 7.15. (If someone hasn't turned up by then, bad luck). Our convoy arrived at the agreed meeting place- the information board at New England National Park entrance.

While Frank, Sharareh, Ryan and Colin walked in from the Robinson's Knob/Wrights Lookout carpark, the rest left from Banksia Point down the top section of Lyrebird to its junction with the Treefern Valley track, then down it to lower Lyrebird. The mist and fog that swirled around us encourages the growth of the very attractive Soft Tree Fern (*Dicksonia antarctica*) and King Fern (*Todea barbara*). The only tree here is the Antarctic Beech (*Nothofagus moorei*), clothed with moss and small ferns.

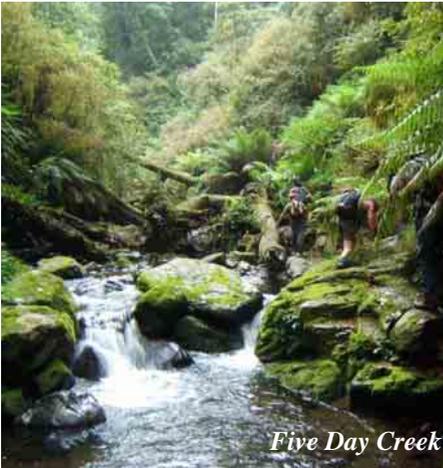
The track was a bit slippery and

uneven, but we soon come to the first of three gullies with small waterfalls. The second of these crossed the largest creek and care was needed to negotiate the slippery rocks and some rotted steps. Rainforest trees in these gullies include Sassafras (*Doryphora sassafras*), which has grey bark, and Possumwood (*Quintinia sieberi*), which has wrinkled brown bark. We brushed aside curtains of the Hanging Moss (*Papillaria*), and slogged through Rainforest Spinach (*Elastostema reticulatum*) in the wettest spots.

After passing through an area of more open forest, the track emerged onto the Robinsons Knob Fire Trail. Near this point several tracks branch off from Robinsons Knob Fire Trail. We turned left, and about 50 metres down, met the other crew making themselves comfortable (after negotiating Wright's Lookout) on the new seat built at the entrance to the Cascades track in honour of a botanist and environmentalist J.B. Williams.

The Cascades loop track descended steeply down to Five Day Creek. As we reached the bottom, about an hour from the Williams seat, the growth of ferns and mosses increased. The creek itself was very beautiful, chuckling busily over moss-green boulders, smooth and slippery as polished glass. We teetered downstream about 200 metres to the bay window where it surges over vertical drop into the rainforest valley below. Carefully returning, we

did a hurried leech check (lots!) before following the creek upstream. There was only the ghost of a track, and it required thought and careful foot placement to avoid a sudden sit down- or worse, a slide down into the creek.



Five Day Creek

When we paused for a break, we admired the deep gloom of ferns pierced by the occasional shaft of sunlight onto a little cascade here and a mossy tree trunk there. The prize for me was the luxuriant growth of the Cascades Silver Lily *Neoastelia spectabilis*. This is the new genus that John Williams had discovered at this site. It has big arching leaves about 120 cm long and 6 cm wide, with a brightly green upper surface green and a silvery-white lower one. We'd missed the spray of white flowers it bears in December, but the bright green 15 mm berries were also a feature.

A few more slips – we're writing to the National Parks asking that this be section be designated a 'route' not as presently a 'track' - and we were back

into the solid going. Soon we were back at John's seat, where we ate a leisurely lunch. The 3 headed back up Robinsons and home, while the remainder took the top loop of Lyrebird. We were especially keen to show Lee, a Canadian zoologist visiting with husband James, one of the Lyrebirds whose scratchings covered the path in places. No sightings, but were lucky enough to hear one imitating 5 different birds on the climb up to the plateau. Attenborough's "Life of Birds" featured the Lyrebird as the greatest mimic in the bird kingdom, and some of the footage to support this claim was shot just a bit further up the track.

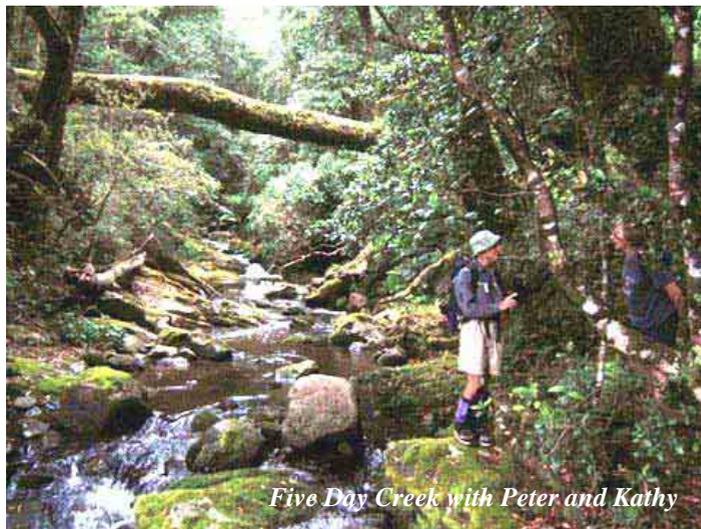
On reaching the plateau, we remarked on the lichen-covered sign put up in the early 1930s by the first ranger, Mr. C.C. Moseley. The rock shows through here, and the thin soil supports a low open forest of Snow Gums (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*) as well as more Messmate Stringybarks (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) in places. Shrubs included Hill Banksia (*Banksia collina*), Mountain Baeckea (*Baeckea utilis*) and a pea, Eggs and Bacon (*Dillwynia retorta*).

Many of us were disappointed that the good viewpoint over the Upper Macleay River valley was blanked out by the persistent fog. (I've included a photo taken in clearer times, so the newcomers will know what they missed).

Shortly, the track dropped back down into temperate rainforest containing Antarctic Beech, Tree Heath (*Trochocarpa montana*),

Pepperbush (*Tasmannia stipitata*) and Tree Ferns. After Treefern Valley junction, we backtracked to Banksia Point.

We drove up to the shelter shed at Point Lookout (1562 m - visibility zilch) and a merry celebration of



Five Day Creek with Peter and Kathy

Paul's birthday, with cake, candles, chocolate slice, and chat with an American who had walked from Brisbane (?) to here in a little over a month, and was seeking information on routes on to his destination (Melbourne!). Peter and Paul gave such good advice that they were elected Secretary and Walks Coordinator respectively during our brief official AGM. No other positions were changed, so Treasurer Kathy hastily wrote membership receipts while the rest of us scoffed chocolate cake and her excellent slice. A pity about the lack of the view that gives Point Lookout its name, but the mist brought out all the rainforest greens, and makes a good viewing day a special event. Maybe next time?

Hyatt's Flat Car Camp 26-28 Jan 2007

by Kathy King

Five of us drove out to Hyatt's Flat on the evening of Australia Day -

Moya Tomlinson, David Lawrence, Paul McCann, Colin Wood and Kathy King. Dark clouds loomed in the distance but the storm had preceded us and was over by the time we reached the campsite. We had to keep a leech watch on our shoes the rest of the evening. The road in was a bit more exciting

than planned with huge water bars across the road.

We woke next morning to the sound of thundering hooves through the camp. Tiny ponies from the next door property were en route to better grazing on the other side of their fence. Alan Cunningham's two-wheel drive car had made it down the road early that morning and by the time we found him, he was surrounded by the horse mob. David gave one a vigorous scratch along its back and its eyes glazed over as he scratched behind its ears.

Our day's walk was along the Styx River from the fishing cabins at the start of Forest Way, back to Hyatt's Flat. We soon reached the weir

which was part of the hydro-electric scheme for the nearby saw mill. Its concrete wall is now breached and water falls into a deep fern-filled hole. We followed the line of a sluice to the bottom of the cascades where

greenhoods and parson's bands.

What a sight of devastation met us back at camp. Our friendly horses had got into our food - eskies, boxes and plastic food containers were strewn all over the place. "Where's

my cooler bag" said Moya. We had visions of a horse with a bright blue Coles bag in its mouth, traipsing gleefully over the countryside.

We spent the afternoon swimming and chatting until Robyn Bartell and



The Cascades near Hyatt's Flat

relics of a water-wheel and generator of the hydro scheme still stand. We crossed over to the cave under the final fall from the cascades. The roof was made up of striking columnar basalt.

The Styx flowed through eucalypt forest and eventually we found the star posts with lurid fluorescent caps which mark a small part of the proposed Waterfall Track from Walcha to the coast. We wandered along old forestry tracks, past huge stumps with holes in the bole which held the standing plank for loggers. Tree ferns covered the flanks of the hills and we came across several varieties of orchid – hyacinths,

Peter Erskine arrived with Robyn's mother, Luise who is with the Geelong Bushwalkers. The horses were back so we hunted them through the fence. Robyn called out "Anyone missing a blue bag?" - She'd found Moya's cooler bag, badly chewed but the contents were intact. The blokes busied themselves with mending the fence.

We filled in what was left of the afternoon sipping red wine and feasting on Robyn's fruit cake. That evening we drove up to Pt Lookout. An electrical storm flashed off the coast and squeaks of micro-bats and boobook owls calling each other across the valley completed the

Long Point

by David Lawrence

Nine of us met at the Visitors Centre at 7 am on a somewhat chilly Autumn morning. After vowing that this would be the last early start to a daywalk this season, we bundled into cars and drove the 32 km to Hillgrove. We remarked on the bright green springing up in the paddocks,

and blessed the 120 mm of rain that had turned this, and only this, corner of NSW into a pastoral paradise.

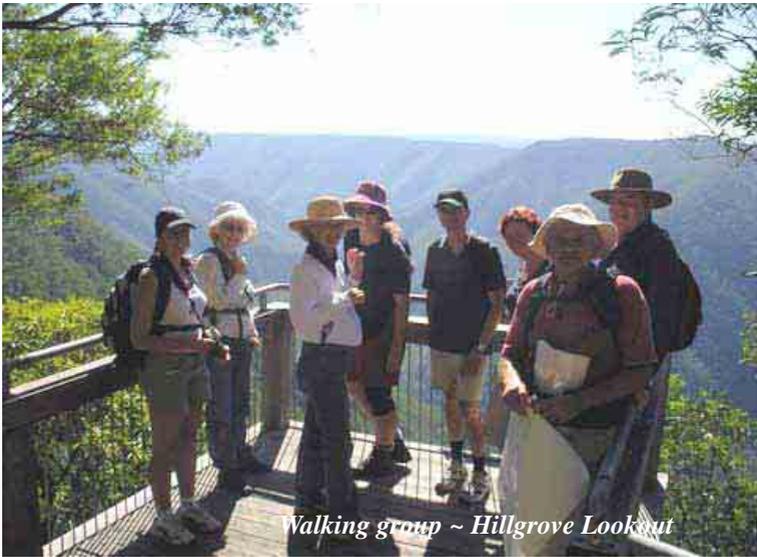
Long Point is a finger of land that stretches deep into the gorges. The ridge is bordered by Bakers Creek on the west and the Chandler River on



The White Whale on The Styx ~ Hyatt's Flat

magic. We watched a satellite make its way right through the Southern Cross. Darkie and Majors Points emerged from the mist which now filled the valleys and when the mist overtook ourselves, we moved off back to camp.

Next day, we drove to Falls Rd off the Kempsey Road. We found several lookouts over the deep Styx Gorge and had lunch on a precarious slope while Paul planned another weekend involving finding the spur we could see in the distance which might provide a better view into the gorge. an enjoyable weekend. authour Kathy King.

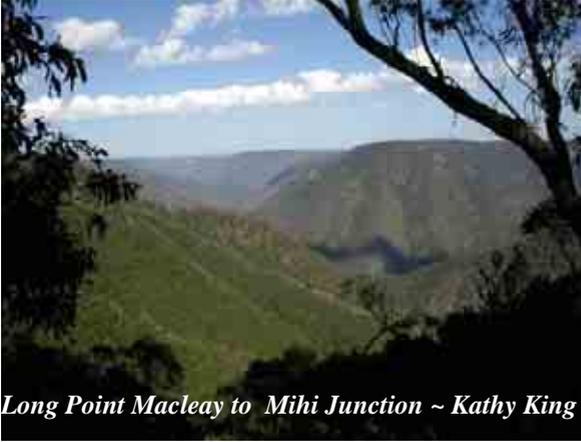


Walking group ~ Hillgrove Lookout

the east, with a good dirt road running along it from Hillgrove. Quickly covered the remaining 17 km, we pulled into the shelter shed a bit after

8, and we took the track northwest through the woodland on the ridgetop to enter the Dry Rainforest.

This is a pretty strange name for a collection of about 190 species of plants that grow mostly in the gullies



Long Point Macleay to Mihi Junction ~ Kathy King

of Oxley Wild Rivers National Park. A large number of these plants are quite rare, and we met two of them on the well-defined rainforest border- Wollomombi Wattle *Acacia diphylla*, a middle sized tree and White Scaly Phebalium *Phebalium squamulosum ssp verrucosum*, a 3 metre shrub.

The rough shaly track was almost obliterated by the scratchings of the Lyrebirds that are thick around here. Keeping a lookout for them, we wandered on to meet one of the less appealing of the inhabitants- the **Do Not Touch**- Giant Stinging Tree *Dendrocnide excelsa*. These grow right beside the path, but thankfully they are easy to spot, with their very large, roundish, light green leaves riddled with insect holes. The stinging hairs covering the plant cause a severe reaction if touched. Marina Hurley,

who did some research on them, met a fellow who'd experienced a severe Dendrocnide stinging in 1941. Cyril Bromley was in the army on the Barron River in North Queensland when he was so severely stung that he had to be tied to bed for 3 weeks

to allow him to be treated. Not that the treatment at the time did much good – the hairs are made of silica, can't be dissolved, and cause intense pain if normal methods such as hot compresses are applied. The pain can recur for months if the site is wetted. Apparently the best treatment is the application of hair removal wax strips, which can pull out the silicon hairs. (Not

many of those available in the jungle in 1941). Hurley wore a facemask and welding gloves when handling the plants. (for more info see

http://www.publish.csiro.au/?act=view_file&file_id=EC105p18.pdf

We soon came to a cleared spot where we could overlook Bakers Creek. ([Enmore map 981072](#)). The day was very clear, and we could see straight up the Macleay to the Salisbury/Mihi Junction about 16 kilometres away (on a bearing of 260 degrees), and what we think was Mt Harnham (53 km) behind it on the horizon.

As we skirted the edge of the dry woodland, we saw lots of the attractive and rare Hillgrove Spotted Gum *Eucalyptus michaeliana*, common only around edges of the gorges of OWRNP. Then The track then

wound through a dense understorey of broad-leaved Hop Bitter-Pea *Daviesia latifolia* till we crossed the Long Point road. The trees became taller, and we found more mushrooms and toadstools springing up after the rain. One distinctive brown and yellow one, *Phlebopus marginatus*, was just bursting through the ground. There's some good images of it fully-grown at :

www.anbg.gov.au/fungi/images-captions/phlebop...

Kathy bobbed around taking photos of fungi and folk while the rest of us crowded onto Chandler View lookout (Enmore 992 083). We were directly opposite the big bend where the Chandler swings around to the east, about 6 km above its meeting with the Oaky. We sighted Round Mountain, at 1580 metres the highest point between Mt Bartle Frere in North Queensland and the Australian Alps on the skyline at 49 degrees and 37 km. The distinctive 'nose' of Point Lookout was visible a bit round to the east at about 68 degrees and 48 km, while Raspberry Mountain jutted up above Styx State Forest at 110 degrees.

We walked on through the taller forest of New England Blackbutt and Blue Gum and the occasional Forest Casuarina. To our delight, we spotted a Golden Orb Weaver web beside the track. This was about 3 metres across and 2 metres high, with the large female perched head-down in the middle, and a very much smaller long-legged male near the top waiting for a mating opportunity. We couldn't find the eggsac, which is normally placed on a nearby tree in

Autumn, but by shifting our angle we caught the web's golden sheen. Individual threads are quite strong, and running into a web gives you a real start -especially if you find the large female whose home you have just wrecked sitting on the end of your nose...

There's a plaque on the Chandler View lookout platform which reads



Hillgrove Gum ~ Kathy King

“This is the place where Gavin asked Anthea to be his wife on Sunday 17th September 2000”.

Discussing the photos of Orb Weaver and lookout plaque later, I wondered “ Did she say ‘Yes?’”. Kathy replied “When you wonder ... - do you mean Anthea or the female orb weaver?”

After a bit of morning tea, with Eric and Jim discussing life at UNE and the rest of us talking about bush creepy-crawlies, we arrived back at the shelter shed at about 12.30. We indulged in the luxury of a table and seats, and people started passing

around indulgences- cake and slices and good coffee- that are never seen on backpacks. We lounged back in state, while Betty, Chris and David talked about the challenge of studying via Distance Education, and how much easier it was to do an internal degree. When Betty, who is doing a course in Linguistics, started talking about studies of how people interrupt, we all became excessively polite, and intensely aware of the fact that men interrupt women much more frequently than women interrupt men...

We packed away lunch, and headed southeast past the toilets and onto the Cassinia Walk. The track skirts a pretty little vale of Blue Gums, Fern-leaf Wattle and Casuarina, then heads round the point to views into the Macleay. Unfortunately, the lookout platform was roped off, so we perched on the edge of the track and searched out landmarks. From here, you get a good view of bright green Dry Rainforest in the gullies between wide ridges of dull green eucalypts. We were able to see the Heart of the Gorges- a great loop where Bakers Creek joins the Macleay- and Blue Nobby Mountain, about 240 degrees and 8 km away across the river at Enmore.

We checked out the male and female Casuarina trees, wondered at a solitary Kurrajong - a seed dropped by a long-gone Aborigine?- and soon arrived back at the cars. People said how much they enjoyed a rejuvenating day at Long Point, left regretfully, and by 4 pm we were back in Armidale.



Mt Duval walk

Mt Duval is a great walk for a half day jaunt. Permission is needed from the university as one has to pass through their property. The interesting part of the trip is the many places where the university has placed boxes for the many animals that frequent this area. An easy walk with few steep hills, the view is not great because of the gentle slope of Mt Duval but the trees more than make up for it. A few of the trees bore the mark of lightning which may eventually kill them. The walk was finished at midday.

The next edition of The Bushwalker is due out soon. To avoid costly postage, please pick up your copy-1 per mailing address - at Armidale Outdoors if you live in Armidale or Uralla postcodes. Far-flung members will have theirs posted."

A special thanks to James and Lee for their Canada slides.