

Armidale Bushwalkers



Armidale Bushwalking Club newsletter No 11 Nov 2007

email editor@armidalebushwalkers.org phone 6775-2026

Wallamarra to Georges Junction

by David Lawrence

Ah! walking in the New England! We sit here on top of the world, high above the steaming coastal plain, and well removed from the arid inland fenced off by Country Music in Tamworth, and cool jazz laced with marijuana fumes in Bellingen. From our lofty eminence, we look down on both.

Of course, that usually means that a bushwalking trip involves a knee-trembling crawl down some rocky ridge with a full pack, a short meander along a riverbank, and a heart-thumping climb out on another steep sliding ridge.

So we decided to find the easiest track down to the bottom, and to arrange to be picked up on the river to avoid all of the climb out. This led us to decide on going by packhorse track down Enmore Long Ridge, and have someone pick us up at Georges Junction. It meant a long car shuttle, and the hire of transport to deliver and pick up. That meant a restriction on the party to either carloads of 4, or a busload of 8-12, and the setting of deposit deadlines.

We were reduced therefore to a party of four in Colin Wood's car trundling out to Enmore in late September. Colin very kindly eased his way down as far as he could, so we had a couple of kilometres less to walk as we hefted packs on a beautiful Spring day and started the descent from 870 metres above sea level at Wallamarra.

As the ridge had probably been used for a nearly a century to bring loaded horses into and out of the gorges, the track maintain a good grade by switchbacking across a broad ridge, so walking down was pretty

easy. The crumbling metasediments that make up the soil hereabouts were heaving with Native Sarsaparilla, Purple Hovea, and bright golden wattles, and across the gorge we caught glimpses of Tabletop and The Cocks Comb rearing up against the clear



River crossing near East Kunderang

southern sky. Even with many pauses for photos, we reached the Postmans Creek-Blue Mountain Creek junction in an hour and a half, for a welcome morning tea break.

From here on, it was all river walking. Max Brennan has been bring trail rides down here for years- it was his actions that have kept our descent ridge in good walking condition, so we had excellent horsetracks to the best river crossings. They lead through groves of Casuarinas and across the stony shallows of Blue Mountain Creek. The earlier winter rains were everywhere evident in bright green grass and scuttling small creatures as we made good time down to Macleay Junction.

The river was running deep and clean, and we started this section with a scramble over a rocky crest before again finding the beloved horse trails. When all these 'ferals' are trucked out of the gorges, and the tracks disappear, and walkers have to struggle through rough undergrowth to make their way down the rivers, some of us will regret their (necessary) passing. Soon we saw our first brumbies- two light chestnuts, a grey and a fine bay. Perhaps these had belonged to some grazier whose fences had been swept away in the winter floods. We followed them snorting away downstream, to pass Kerosene Creek and Bottom Gully under twining bowers of golden Pandorea on the open terraces, and by red-berried Yellow Cedar in the thickets. Rusty Figs clung to sheltered rocky clefts, while Bottlebrushes with their red flowers just opening bordered all the



A couple of brumbies taking an interest

river. In one sheltered cleft, on a bed of soft grass, we found a calf half-asleep, safely hidden away by its mother. It opened one eye, and watched us without stirring as we tiptoed away.

The long rocky cliffs bordering Oven Camp glowed in the late sun as we made our last ford before going into camp by Kunderang Yard Creek. We could have fitted 500 tents on the acres of closely-trimmed lawns that horses and kangaroos had made for us, but we four clustered together by a welcoming fire after an easy

17-kilometre day. As darkness fell and the stars came out, a clutch of dingoes started howling across the river- perfect music for this wild setting.

As usual, Peter was first up, and we three soon followed. We'd set 8 o'clock as starting time, but were all ready and on the track by 7.37 am. We immediately made our first crossing- always a challenge in the cool of morning- and were soon inspecting the site at the end of Long Point where 3 of us had camped last year. On, with the beautiful stony ridge of Chandler Junction soon rising up on the northern side of the Macleay in front of us. We had a break at the Junction, and headed on downstream with another group of horses clattering across the gravel ahead. The widening banks were now covered with a good deposit - often 5 cm thick- of silt from the winter floods. We tried to work out how high the water had reached, and talked about the silt of the ancient Nile revitalising the farms of peasants all those thousands of years ago, and watched the day grow before us. A stop to fill up our water bottles, and to experiment with cleaning the club water filter- great for a trip like this- and we were opposite a narrow neck of land with an obliging horsetrack across it giving a one- kilometre short cut to our lunch stop.

We had originally planned to camp at Apsley Junction, but we were making such good time that we found ourselves opposite it at 2.30. We stopped here for a short ceremony mourning the loss of one of Robyn's thongs- apparently not tied on well enough- and suitable bad jokes along the line of "The Thong has ended, but the Malady lingers on" before deciding to head on downstream for a bit. The banks were even broader, and covered with cattle from West Kunderang so we kept near the river to avoid disturbing them. Passing-regretfully- the bright green tent sites of West Kunderang Recreational Retreat- so inviting, but we had not asked permission- we went into camp about 4.30 a kilometre

or so below it.

A good night around the fire, with recall of other trips, and talk of how little constituted a heavenly camp- flat grass, a convenient tree, a good fire pit, a log to sit on- and a convenient toilet spot discreetly nearby- as the fire died down and we yawned into bed.

A 7.30 start- we were getting into a good rhythm- and into the deeper crossings of the combined Apsley and Macleay waters. We were careful- undoing our chest and



Easy walking near the river bank

waist straps, using a strong pole, and edging slowly sideways across the deeper bits- and so there were no mishaps. The 23 km we had walked yesterday meant we had plenty of time, so we ambled along over Fig Tree Flat and Tea Tree Flat and past McLeods Point- all the names of land once grazed and sweated over and loved by vanished generations- to a leisurely morning tea before Quakers Gully (Who was McLeod? What was a Quaker doing in this country?). The favoured spots had thickets of Wild Tobacco - a spreading shrub about 2.5 metres tall which casts welcome shade on open riverbanks- and we now had a rough 4WD road in place of wild horse tracks. Kathy guided us to a landmark big fig tree, with the sawn timber that once leant against it now enclosed in its growing trunk, and then down to lunch on the riverbank above

Carrai Creek, with the Carrai Tableland rising up above it.

Soon we were at what was to be our last crossing. It was a fitting trial- long, with unexpected boulders, and fairly deep. We edged carefully across it, and took lots of photos- but nobody obligingly fell into the water, so we decided to head up to say hello to the folks staying at East Kunderang.

They were a couple who worked with National Parks, and were caretaking the place while renovations were being done. We were invited in, so we gratefully took our wet boots off to pad around the house barefooted on a conducted tour. We exclaimed over the excellent materials and planning of the very sympathetic extensions, and gratefully devoured the afternoon tea that Matt and Megan thoughtfully provided. Then we compared light footwear- Peter's stylish pumps, versus Megan's

Croc shoes and Kathy's Tevas. David managed to get us lost on the short trip down to the riverbank- ostensibly so we could visit the sign banning horse travel along this section of the National Trail in an attempt to contain the Equine Influenza epidemic- before we started hurriedly collecting firewood and erecting tents before the threatening rain. That hurry, and open-toed Tevas, lead to Kathy catching a toe on a stick. She bravely said " Do you mind if I sit for a while?" while we looked at a large toenail torn back at 45 degrees and wondered how she stopped from crying.

While Peter and Robyn stayed with Kathy, David headed back up to the homestead and rang Colin to inform him of the situation. He kindly volunteered to drive out to pick us up from East that night, so we headed back in Matt's ute to

pick up Kathy. Fortunately GeralXX was a Senior First Aide at Armidale High, and she did a great job of trimming and bandaging and medicating so Kathy could hobble to the ute. Soon the patient was settled on a lounge chair on the verandah, our gear was back in packs, and Matt and David were headed up the hill to unlock the gate for Colin.

It was about 6.15 when Colin arrived, and we gave our thanks and goodbyes to the two Good Samaritans before heading up on the slow drive up to Raspberry Road. Then on and on to join the Kempsey-Armidale Road. We were about 6 km along it, with light rain falling, when Kathy noticed the temperature gauge had risen. Colin said "That's funny- I put two new radiator hoses on it last week". The discussion was finished when a cloud of steam rose from the under the bonnet, and we pulled up on the roadside.

After waiting for things to cool down, we tightened the leaking bottom radiator hose, fed in the last of our water, and pattered on up the track, all eyes anxiously on the temperature gauge. Soon it rose again, and we just managed to glide into a house- all lights on, no people- where we tightened and filled up again, and carefully eased our way up again to the Waterfall Way. Two obliging motorists stopped- one gave us a screwdriver to replace our inefficient Swiss Army Knife - waved away thanks, and headed off- as we repaired again, but only managed to limp another two km before a boiling radiator demanded we stop again. By this time, it was 10 pm, so with reluctance we rang Jenny and Trish to beg for a lift home.

Telling jokes- they went downhill from bad to terrible as we waited- passed the time till our next lot of Good Samaritans arrived. Colin decided he would go ahead in the wounded vehicle and see how far he could get. With the light load, and the cooler night air, the problem (almost certainly a defective thermostat) eased, and he made it home, while the rest of us profusely thanked our lifts and tumbled in front doors pretty close to midnight.

So a great river walk ended with an "adventure". Kathy was OK after treatment (It's a nice choice when the doctor says " Would you prefer me to tear off the remaining toenail without anaesthetic, and it'll be extremely painful, or have a local anaesthetic and it'll be just very painful?"). We think the Tevas-as-bush-footwear issue was definitely settled in four walker's minds- and the next day went searching for lightweight enclosed camp shoes.

The Thong

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 robyn on her walk at end of day
'Twas at the apasley junction
Where we had stopped for 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 robyn 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 -

Syndicate Sidetracks

by *David Lawrence*

Brian Hardaker and I have been working on a brochure for the various walks you can do in the northern end of Dorrigo National Park, strung out along the Syndicate Ridge track. It was time to put the notes to the test. So a couple of more or less willing guinea pigs and I headed off to Dorrigo on a fine Sunday at the end of September. They were given the track notes, and to my considerable relief, we ended up at the Slingsbys Road car park at 9.55. After a quick morning tea, we headed through the entry gate. Gradients from the

top car park to the edge of the escarpment are in the main gentle, mostly on 4WD trails, so we had an easy saunter along Slingsbys Trail past over-weight cattle-there'd been about 430 millimetres of rain here a month or two ago, and the

vegetation was zooming up- for a couple of kilometres into the Killungoondie Plain. This is a treeless area that has been kept that way by Aboriginal burning, with the practice continued by subsequent European settlers. As it has not been burnt for about 40 years, there's a lot of regrowth along its fringes - Blackwood Wattles, White Banksias and Casuarinas. Across Wild Cattle Creek, we saw Port Jackson Cypress Pine, with emergent Hoop Pine here and there on the mountain side. The Victorian Christmas Bush carpets the ground with its dropped white petals in summer, but we were too early for that in early Spring.

As we left the plain, we saw the beautiful

Forest Ribbon Gum, and tried to recall the difference between it and the "Dorrigo White Gum hereabouts- agreeing that the latter has a whiter trunk, and smaller leaves and fruit than the former."

As we walked deeper into the forest, we spotted a derelict forestry hut on our right, and speculated on the immense amount of sweat the early roadmakers must have expended in digging the box cutting nearby for hauling out the logs. Common Tea-tree grew thickly, and the weird Clubmosses resembling tiny Christmas



Bridge over Wild Cattle Creek

trees formed a groundcover beside the track. We felt the trunks of the Rough Tree Ferns to tell them from the shorter, thicker-trunked Soft Tree Fern of other areas, and looked up at the Birds Nest Ferns clinging to upper tree trunks.

About 4 kilometres from the carpark we came to a rough bush camping area, with just a clearing, a ring of stones for a fireplace, and the second crossing of Wild Cattle Creek for water. Opposite the camp about 25 metres into the bush there's an Antarctic Beech that must be 5 metres in diameter, with about 20 coppiced shoots sprouting from it.

Here Slingsbys Trail forks left, and after a further 2 km you come to the short track

off to Lanes Lookout. When this was the main road to Upper Bobo, it was said that half the babies of Dorrigo were conceived here. Since then, the trees have grown and the lookout is not as expansive as before.



Still, it gave good views of much of the coastal plain towards Mylestom, and we happily munched out lunches while pointing out landmarks.

Returning a few steps, we turned off Slingsby's trail to the left onto a foot track. This lead through cool temperate rainforest parallel to the edge of the escarpment, with Corkwood, Antarctic Beech and the tallest Common Tea Trees we'd ever seen. We stayed on this track after passing a turnoff on the right, and arrived at Stony Creek Lookout about 1 hour and 10 minutes after lunch. This gave better views of the coast, with a clear sight of Bellingen and the upper Bellingen River towards Point Lookout. Well worth the walk.

Rather than retrace our steps, we took the zigzagging footpath down meet the

Syndicate Track about 15 minutes below. Then sharp right up over a big log, and we picked up the line of the bush tramway that had been cleared and built in about 1910. It ran till 1928, taking timber- mostly

Hoop Pine- from the Dorrigo Plateau to the Bellingen Valley for transshipment to Sydney. Artefacts remain- half-buried sleepers and wooden tramlines, the occasional wheel, and, after a 30-minute uphill puff, the big Bullwheel around which the towing cable once ran. From here, the track is fairly level, so with the odd pause while a snake slithered across the path, and a drink back at the Bush Camp, we were back at our car by 4.30 pm. We had a bit of a hiccup with a flat battery, but mercifully there was mobile phone coverage, and the efficient Dorrigo NRMA guy had us going with only a 30 minute delay. A very pleasant walk, with Dorrigo bright greens, rainforest, coastal views, and a bit of interesting history.

Apprentice wanted

**The editor is looking
for someone who is
interested in learning
how to do the website
and newsletter. We
need someone else
with the expertise to
take over if needed.**

**Tuition given. Email
editor@armidalebushwalkers.org**

Tia & Apsley Falls Walk 2 Sept 2007

by Kathy King

Our group, on this beautiful spring day, was small but exclusive. Lorraine Hecker



Upper Apsley Falls

territories – the tree-creepers were quite insistent about it while the pardalotes just kept up a running commentary in the background.

We availed ourselves of the BBQ facilities at the picnic area and had a hot lunch. Lorraine's walks are always well thought out food-wise. After filling up on meats and salads, licorice allsorts, biscuits and banana bread (burp), we drove off to Apsley Falls to walk off our over-indulgences in the food department. On our way out of Tia, we passed the "dingo" tree where the farmer had hoisted up 4 dead bodies, of varying colours, to display his catch. Wild dogs have been a problem in the district lately.

took Betty Noad, Kathy King and Jim Palmer out, firstly to Tia Gorge and then to walk the tracks around the Apsley Falls. We explored about 5 km of the Tia gorge rim. The falls were quite spectacular after the recent rains that had fallen in the Walcha district. We continued onto the viewing platform overlooking the Tia gorge downstream. Here, the gorge is deep, steep and very wild. The river was still falling over small cascades and through canyons with many overlapping spurs continuing on into the hazy distance several km downstream. We retraced our steps to the picnic area, crossed the bridge over the swiftly flowing Tia River, and wandered along the gorge rim on the other side. At the end of the track we got a long distance view of the falls, still specky even this far off. On the way back to the car, Jim pointed out various bird calls. The warm weather must have spurred them into marking out their

Apsley Falls too, were running well and we had good viewing points from the stairs and platforms down the gorge side. Jim



Jim Betty Kathy Tia Falls

and Lorraine pondered on how dead eels and fish ended up on the river banks below the falls – were they dinged on the head as they swam in the pools at the bottom by a log coming over the falls or did they get flushed into the gorge from above by the

floods? Who knows, but they could see through their binoculars, a determined coot trying to peck the flesh off the bodies. Betty was impressed with the gorge walls which were vertical slabs of black, slatey stone. She was even more impressed with the brown scar on the gorge side which was the 1987 landslide into the gorge which suddenly made the rim-edge viewing platform we were standing on,



Tabletop from Cheyenne Spur



Tia Falls

feel particularly flimsy. We crossed the Apsley River on a bridge bedecked with recent flood debris and walked around the gorge rim to see the lower falls.

It was good to renew our acquaintance with this area again. None of us had been out here for some time and it was a good time to visit after substantial rains.



An invention by Jim. A water trolley successfully used on the Cheyenne-Tabletop walk

Tabletop - Cheyenne walk 17-19 November

“ Nine members of the club were on the walk . Five did the walk toTabletop, while the others walked from Tabletop Retreat to Cheyenne farm stay.

The water trolley used was very successfull in cutting down weight. Other peices of gear was also stowed in it. The weather was great and the track was easy with most on fire trails- although the shortcut to The Cockscomb wasn't as expected and all agreed that next time they will take the usual way.”