

Armidale Bushwalkers



Armidale Bushwalking Club Vol 2 No 1 February 2006

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From The Tablelands To The Sea - By Peter Rodger

Three club members recently completed a walk from Walcha on the New England Tableland to the coast at Coffs harbour. David Lawrence, Paul McCann and Peter Roger undertook the walk as both a personal challenge and as a means of highlighting some of the natural attributes of the New England/ North Coast areas.

The walk was planned under the auspices of the New England Eco-Tourism Society which has, as a project the establishment of long distance walking track along the route taken, with opportunities for accommodation at several points, with landholders offering host farm facilities.

Our journey began in early Spring at Apsley Falls in lingering wintry weather which continued with a mix of temperature variations until we reached the Bellinger River valley several weeks later. From our starting point, the gorge rim of the Apsley River was followed, and included the various subsidiary side gorges until we reached one of the long ridges which would be our first descent from the highlands into the valley of Blue Mountain Greek, which is a major tributary in the Macleay River system. Several days of river walking would follow until we again regained the tablelands at Danger's Falls near Armidale. From here we would again follow gorge rims through National Park areas and sometimes, private property, for which prior permission had been obtained, until again descending to the river valleys via the long ridge dividing the Chandler and Oaky Rivers. We ascended to the tablelands again by walking up the Styx River to what proved to be a suitable access point to take us out on to the Kempsey Road and the Forestry HQ. Our way then led to what would be the highest point on our walk - in the New England National Park near Point Lookout (1560 metres).

The descent into Sunday Greek and the Bellinger River valley is one of the longest in Australia. A day and a half downstream would bring us to our last significant climb up to the Dorrigo plateau. Once

gained we made our way across the plateau to the Syndicate Track, a steepish descent to the coastal plains. A series of used and disused forestry tracks led us to the beach at Mylstom, with thereafter one and a half days of pleasant beach walking (sometimes in rain) to our destination at Mutton Bird Island in Coffs Harbour. Waiting for us were City Council officials and champagne, as part of a civic and media welcome.

Altogether a great experience over a wide range of country in terms of landform, vegetation and climate. We had started in typically cold tablelands weather with sleet and flurries of snow at one point, and finished in typically warm coastal conditions. Statistically we had walked for 26 days and covered: 530 kilometres.

Will the notion of a continuous walking track following our general route ever be realised? The future alone will tell, but with vision and determination



Peter & David heading to Blue Mountain Spur

it could. The Ecotourism Society is already writing brochures for a number of tracks in the area, and has borrowed the name applied to the Armidale-Coast road. We should soon see the emergence of the The Waterfall Way Walking Track Network, and maybe in time we might see a formed track from the Tablelands to the Sea. " it already has a name coined by the Eco-Tourism Society - The Waterfall Way Walking Track, a descriptive title borrowed from the name of the road from Armidale to the coast, viz. The Waterfall Way.

Back from the brink, well and truly

Andy Macqueen*

“The dreary appearance, abruptness, intricate and dangerous route we experienced at this place, induced me to call it the Devil’s Wilderness.”

So wrote George Caley after clambering down to the confluence of the Grose River and Wilderness Brook in 1804. He was on an epic journey to Mount Banks, and his troubles were only just beginning. At every turn he was confronted by canyons, strange rock formations, thick vegetation or amazing insects.

Caley and his convict assistants did not appreciate the natural values and opportunities for solitude afforded by the Grose Wilderness. When they camped in the sassafras in Dismal Dingle, near Claustal Canyon, his men found it so oppressive that on the return journey they refused to stop there even for a rest. “We’d prefer the worst cell we’ve ever seen in a prison,” they said.

Such places were no prison to the Aborigines. They had travelled through and lived in the Grose area for thousands of years. There is evidence of significant occupation quite close to Blue Gum. But the early whites were repelled, and many are still repelled. Even in the tracked areas, many people find the prospect of a walk deep into the valley or out amongst the mazes of ridges too unpleasant, too difficult, or too scary to contemplate.

Development has been kept out of most of the Grose area for two centuries, thanks to its ruggedness and to various moves to preserve it. As early as 1875 a large part was reserved partly in recognition that it was a “national spectacle”, thereby defining what could be described as Australia’s first national park. This did not however prevent leases being taken up at Blue Gum Forest, and it was one of these that became the focus of the campaign in 1931-32 - a campaign which probably did more than anything else to give momentum to the national park campaigns of Myles Dunphy and his bushwalking followers.

In 1959, when Dunphy’s Blue Mountains National Park dream started to be realised, parts of the Grose formed the lions share of the new reserve.

Not that there haven’t been real threats to the area’s integrity. Schemes for dams, mines, power stations, roads and logging have all surfaced at various times. In the 1920s a mining company proposed to transform the valley “from a riot of scrubland to a hive of industry”. In the 1850s the Grose River offered the favoured route for the western railway. And as recently as 1999, Earth Sanctuaries proposed to fence off part of the valley for a wildlife sanctuary with associated tourist developments.

None of these things got off the ground. Except the fire trails. After the 1957 bushfires it was judged that the best means of preventing future such disasters was to bulldoze a road along every ridge. Today most of these roads are redundant and – consistent with Confederation’s vision – some of them have been closed and are revegetating. Others, although they are in the wilderness, are to continue as management roads, though public traffic will not be allowed – except for bicycles.

A glaring anomaly is the Mount Hay Road, which is to remain as a non-wilderness finger penetrating deep into the wilderness, in spite of a strong case put by Confederation and the conservation lobby in general that the road should be terminated at Fortress Ridge or The Pinnacles. Many fear that the tranquil spot out near Mount Hay will one day be an Echo Point.

Of course, bushwalkers and campers have their own impact on natural areas. For this reason Acacia Flat, with its high visitation, toilets and signposts, has not been included in the Grose Wilderness – along with the Govett Gorge and the popular tracks there. Fittingly, the patch of ground all the fuss was about in 1931-32, the original Blue Gum Forest Reserve, *is* included in the wilderness. (The wilderness boundary runs alongside the Perrys and Lockleys tracks: people walking from Pierces pass or Victoria Falls are now in wilderness, and need to limit their party to eight people, unless they obtain approval for a greater number.)

In *Back from the Brink* I wrote “If the Grose Wilderness comes into being, the wild values of the area will be enshrined in legislation. Generations to come will be able to explore its hidden recesses, or sit and contemplate it in solitude, without further threat from new roads or tourist developments. They will be able to contemplate the activities of people like George Caley, ... and countless Aborigines before them – and wonder that the place has survived intact.”

It has a few warts, but the Grose Wilderness has now come into being, and the area will indeed survive intact.

*Andy was president when Confederation nominated the Grose Wilderness. He is also author of *Back from the Brink: Blue Gum Forest and the Grose Wilderness*. Copies of the book are still available in some shops, or direct from the author at 8 Angel street Wentworth Falls 2782 or andymacq@pnc.com.au

ARMIDALE BUSHWALKERS AMENDED SUMMER/AUTUMN WALKS PROGRAM 2006

Sunday 26th February A pleasant walk in the Wattle Flat Styx. area.

Easy 6 kms on track. Ample opportunity for swimming and leisurely lunch. Contact Andrew Pearson 6771 2360,

Sunday 6th March Washpool National Park. Coombadjha Falls

An off track walk, easy/med grade to a location outside the usual tourist routes. Contact Paul McCann 6772 6156

Sunday 12th .March. The Six Waterfalls Walk

Easy /medium all off track 7 kms. Booking Colin Wood 6775 9214,
bookings must be definite as only 9 limit. Get in early for this great walk, bring your swimmers.

Sat-Sunday 25th-26th March New England and Cathedral Rock NP

Saturday: Point Lookout - Lyrebird Walk - Wrights Lookout - The Cascades, great circuit walk. Camp Saturday night at Wattle Flat, Bring Li-10's for a float from picnic, area to camping area (optional)

Sunday: Cathedral Rock either loop walk 7 kms or full walk from Barokee Picnic area Native Dog 12 kms (car shuffle required), Walks Grade: easy medium on track. A great opportunity for an overnight' walk in conjunction with a car car at a great spot. Contact Robyn Bartel 6772 8587,

Friday 14th- Mon 17th April (Easter) Oxley Wild Rivers National Park

Overnight medium walk of four days duration starting at Buds Mare, down to the Apsley River and including a superb view from Paradise Rocks (steep climb). Contact Paul McCann 6772 6158.

Note: walk may need to be deferred to following weekend (April 22nd to 25th). Leader will advise this when booking for walk.

Sunday April 30th Oxley Wild Rivers National Park

Steep Drop Falls area. Easy medium day walk la conjunction, with the NPA Arm! dale Branch. Sore® significant stands of native vegetation and magnificent views of Rowleys Creek gorge will be a feature of this walk. Contact Paul McCann 6772 6156,

Advance NoticeFuture trips:

Warrabah NP overnight car camp with day walks. Dorrigo NP day walk Killungoondie Plain - Dibbs Head - Lanes Lookout, Guy Fawkes River NP overnight walk from the escarpment to the river and return, Dorrigo NP day walk down Syndicate Ridge, Early start, long car shuffle,

Oxley Wild Rivers NP

five day walk through the Macleay River system, expression of interest sought,

If you are interested in leading the above or something else contact Peter Rodger 6772 0464 or come to the next meeting Thursday 23rd March at the Outdoor Guiding Centre, at 7 pm

Come along and give us some ideas about your club

April or May 2006

Expressions of interest; Canoe trip from Riverside to Georges Junction. on the. Macleay River. All canoes, paddles, etc and transport supplied,

Suitable for paddlers with a little experience. Contact David Lawrence 6775 3164 before 26th March, (Plan B if floods 4 day walk TBA).

April or May, 2006

Expressions of Interest: Canoe trip from Riverside to Georges Junction on Macleay leaving Armidale 8 am Friday (say) and returning by 4 pm on Monday. All canoes, paddles, drums, safety gear and transport from Armidale and return supplied. Suitable for paddlers with a little experience. Limit 12. Costs from Armidale \$175 p.p. (minimum 6 people) to \$120 (maximum 12 people). Ring David Lawrence 0267 753164 by Sunday 26th March for details. (Plan B if floods 4-day walk TBA)

Armidale Bushwalking Club – Annual General Meeting Sunday December 4th 2005 at Blue Hole

Meeting opened: 12.45 pm

Present: Dave Lawrence, Lindsay Teychenne, Jane Growsns, Kathy King, Beat Haas, Erika Molnar, Andrew Pearson, Robyn Bartel, Peter Erskine, Linda Edman

1. **Apologies:** Col Wood, Peter Rodgers
2. **Minutes of last AGM (Thursday 23rd September 2004):** Read and approved. Moved Andrew Pearson, Seconded David Lawrence, Accepted unanimously.
3. **President's Report:** Appended.
4. **Treasurer's Report:** Appended. Moved Lindsay Teychenne, Seconded Robyn Bartel, Accepted unanimously.
5. **Membership Report:** 62 members at present. Will probably go down soon as memberships come due, before building again.
6. **Election of office bearers** – run by Jim Palmer

	Nominations	Nominated by	Seconded by
President/Public Officer	David Lawrence	Jane Growsns	Lindsay Teychenne
Vice-President	Col Wood	Andrew Pearson	Beat Haas
Treasurer	Beat Haas	Lindsay Teychenne	Andrew Pearson
Secretary	Jane Growsns	David Lawrence	Beat Haas
Committee members	Peter Rodgers	David Lawrence	Jane Growsns
	Lindsay Teychenne	Jane Growsns	Kathy King

All nominations were accepted unanimously. Peter Rodgers to continue as Walks Coordinator, Lindsay Teychenne to continue as Membership Secretary. Col Wood is willing to stay as Newsletter Editor.

Dave urged members to strongly consider nominating for positions next year and for present office bearers to consider withdrawing. Turnover of these positions is essential to the future of the club.

Meeting closed 1.10 pm.

President's Report

In 2004, Armidale Bushwalkers has grown to a membership of over 60. We have had 28 "Excursions" - one being a canoe trip, the remainder walks ranging from a half-day stroll to Mt Duval to the WAMBLE of 28 days and 525 km. Some walks have attracted few participants. That's normal, and the walk leaders should appreciate that the same walk at different time or with different weather might attract many takers. On the other hand, there's a number of "phantom" members who pay their subs and we never see on any trips. Inverell Club had a number of these that paid up for several years, and nobody knew who they were! I guess it might be the result of a New Year's Resolution- "I'm going to lose some weight and exercise more this year"- well, we thank them for their subs, and hope to see them sometime, somewhere, in 2005.

We all hosted a talk by Ian Brown, the many-faceted outdoor traveller. The (regrettably small) audience heard about climbing in New Zealand, walking in Tropical Australia, and an epic trip to the South Pole. Magical slides about marvelous places.

Nick Stephenson, David Lawrence, Peter Rodger, Paul McCann, Jane Gowns, Colin Wood, Isabel Tasker, Lindsay Teychenne, and Andrew Pearson have all organised and lead walks, and to them I extend my appreciation- walk leaders are the heart of any club, no leaders-no trips.

Others who have been club office-bearers - Jane, Peter, Colin, Lindsay, Sandra Rothwell, Keryn Hutton, and Beat Haas - have taken us through our first year in good financial shape and with a healthy membership. Now they have done the hard part, the set-up year, the job of continuing their work should be a lot easier. So I hope we have lots of people willing to take office for 2006. David Lawrence December 2005

ARMIDALE BUSHWALKERS Statement of Financial Performance Year ended 30 Nov 2005

Revenue

Membership	1,757.00
Interest	0.74
Events	34.00
Total income	1,791.74

Expenses

Confederation	668.75
Banking	25.80
Events	250.00
Post Box	62.33
Postage	25.00
Advertisement	67.50
Total Expenses	1,099.38

Deficit/Surplus 692.36

Bank Balance	642.36
Petty Cash	50.00

Please note all walks leaders are asked to submit a track report on each walk. Send to Colin Wood "Yaraandoo" Point lookout Rd Armidale 2350 or email to turton@austarnet.com.au Next meeting Thursday 23rd March at the Outdoor Guiding Centre, at 7 pm. Images from past walks, Winter Walks Program planning. Light supper will be provided.

Come along and give us some ideas about your club