

12 CREEK WALKS



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Walking Upstream: Waterways of the Illawarra

By Kim Williams, Brogan Bunt, and Lucas Ihlein

Published by Leech Press



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12 Creek Walks

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Foreword

The walks described in this book take place on the lands and waters of the Wadi Wadi people of Dharawal Country. As we walk along these waterways, we acknowledge the traditional custodians and pay respects to their deep connection and knowledge of this country. The name for this region, the Illawarra, has been interpreted in a variety of ways - one of which is 'where mountains look down on the sea'.

Indeed, the area runs along the coast, bounded by the sea to the east, and a steep escarpment on the west. Rainwater seeps down the escarpment forming countless waterways: rivulets, creeks, gullies, brooks. Some are named, many are not. Often, these creeks run through backyards, alongside sports ovals, through industrial estates, and feature both "picturesque" water features and "unsightly" concrete-lined drains.

We begin at the sea, at an identifiable mouth. We walk our way upstream, hacking through weeds and undergrowth, skirting along property boundaries, talking our way into people's yards. We continue for as long as geography, topography, and social boundaries allow.

This book introduces 12 of the local walkable creeks in the Illawarra. There are many more creeks to choose from (see map on pages 10 and 11), and we encourage you to conduct your own explorations. The authors of this book have no special skills in creek walking (assuming dedicated skills in this field of activity actually exist!). Instead they bring curiosity and the desire to engage more deeply with the geographical, ecological and social fabric of our local environment.

Detours through suburban streets are often necessary - and these should be seen as an integral part of the process of walking upstream.

Whimsical reports on our experiences are posted occasionally on our website, <http://walking-upstream.net>. We look forward to hearing your creek stories too.

A NOTE ON TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN ACTIONS:

When walking the creeks of the Illawarra, please respect the plants, animals, waters, soils and topography of the riparian corridors. Please also be respectful of the people who live in close proximity to the creeks, and who may be confused about why you're undertaking this unusual saunter.

We have often found that a physical impediment (like a fence) can be navigated deftly by having a friendly chat with the property owner. This approach has extra advantages: creekside locals have local knowledge, and by engaging with them we stand to learn more about the way that the waterways of the Illawarra affect and are affected by human lives.

Should you decide to go on any walk, including those described in this publication, you will be voluntarily choosing to do so, and you understand and accept that there are inherent and obvious risks, hazards and dangers in physical activity such as bush walking and walking along creeks.

The authors are not encouraging you to participate in any:

- risk taking behaviour;
- dangerous physical activity;
- trespassing; or
- damage to property.



As such, if you choose to explore or go on any of the walks described in this publication, you are freely and voluntarily assuming all risks associated with any of those walks. This publication contains general information only and the authors make no warranties to the accuracy to any of the information included in this publication.

To the maximum extent permitted by law, the authors disclaim any responsibility for loss, damage, or liability suffered or incurred directly or indirectly by any individual, company or organisation as a result of reliance upon anything contained or implied by this publication or the omission of anything from it.

OUR POSITION ON CREEKS AND PRIVATE PROPERTY:

NSW property law is complicated. If a creek runs through a suburban backyard, the creek bed and banks (but not the water flowing through it) are legally the property of the home-owner. In Queensland, the law differs - the creek bed and the bank to the high water mark are deemed “Crown Land”.

Dividing, fencing and “owning” land and water - these are constructs which are very new in Australia. Clearly, the dominant property ownership system imported from Europe 230 years ago does not align with the human-land systems developed over many thousands of years by Aboriginal peoples prior to invasion.

While we cannot simply do away with the current legal system, that does not mean we have to agree with the idea that it is “right” for a creek to be privately owned. We believe that access to creeks should not be obstructed by fences, except where sensitive ecosystem repair is being conducted. We believe

that private property owners should leave a riparian corridor alongside creeks, and should definitely not run fence-lines right down to the water’s edge. We believe that creeks belong to everyone, but most of all, creeks belong to themselves.

Leech Removal Techniques

Technique	Method	Success%
The Flick (for small leeches)	Using middle finger and thumb, apply short sharp flick directly to leech	30%
Pick and Flick (for small to medium leeches)	With thumb and forefinger, pull leech directly from skin. Flick leech as far away from you as possible. Repeat as many times as necessary.	Varies
The Yank (for large, blood-engorged leeches)	a) Grip leech between thumb and several fingers and yank hard against strong resistance.	20% if slimy
Parts a)+b)	b) If unsuccessful, apply salt to leech and witness its agonising death	100%

Walk, walk, walk.

An exhortation

by Vincent Bicego

Pick a waterway. Any waterway. Creek, rivulet, lagoon, aqueduct. Somewhere between Helensburgh to the north and Nowra to the south. The choice is yours. Start at the mouth. Where the waterway meets the sea. Now walk. Upstream. Walk. Sometimes by yourself, sometimes not. Invite colleagues, friends, acquaintances. Invite the public. But most importantly, walk. Walk. Upstream.

Have a map handy. What sensible person wouldn't? Google has that covered. It knows everything. Be prepared to climb fences. Be prepared to jump channels. Be prepared to lose sight of the waterway. They often disappear. Under roads. Into stormwater drains. Through private property. Be prepared to search for it. Be prepared to be distracted by other things. Most importantly, be prepared to get your feet wet. It's inevitable. It's fun. And as you get your feet wet, talk. Talk about the waterway. Talk about what you had for breakfast. Talk about the projects you are working on. Ask questions. Observe.

Observe how the map you started with bears little relation to what you have experienced on the ground. The lines, words, symbols. Almost beautiful in their abstraction. Ridiculous in their inaccuracy. Stupid Google. It failed to register the abandoned couch, positioned on the water's edge as comfortably as if in a living room (perhaps more

so). It failed to register those three boys fording the creek on their bikes, modifying their conversation when they noticed you. It failed to register the raft of woodland ducks cooling themselves in the deep shade of the coral trees. And most significantly, it failed to register the sensations, emotions, and ideas, you have experienced. It failed. Discard the map, if you wish. Or, perhaps more fruitfully, amend it. The choice is yours.

Are you still walking? If not, that's fine. One runs out of stream eventually. Sit. Sit and eat. Share your lunch with the person who was running late and didn't have time to pack. But most importantly, talk. About the waterway. And not about the waterway. Pick up the conversation started earlier, disrupted by circumstance, observation, or its intersection with another conversation. Consider how far upstream you have walked. Or consider how little. The waterway still stretches before you. Up into the foothills of the escarpment. But that it is for another day. When, you are not sure. Perhaps never. There are, after all, other waterways to walk. Walk. Walk. Walk.



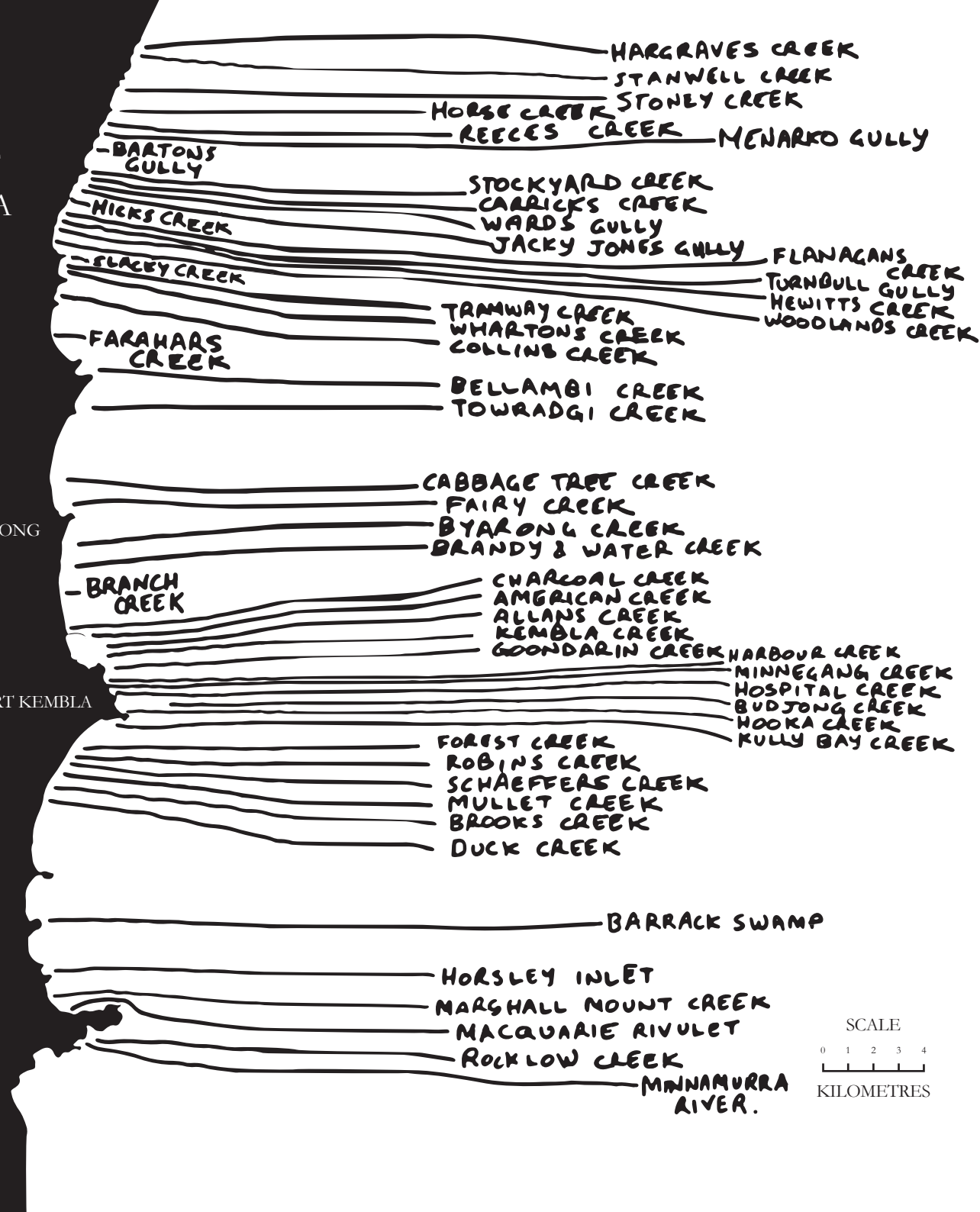
MAP OF THE WATERWAYS OF THE ILLAWARRA

WOLLONGONG

PORT KEMBLA



N



SCALE

0 1 2 3 4

KILOMETRES

Macquarie Rivulet

1.5-2
HOURS



TIME

GRADE

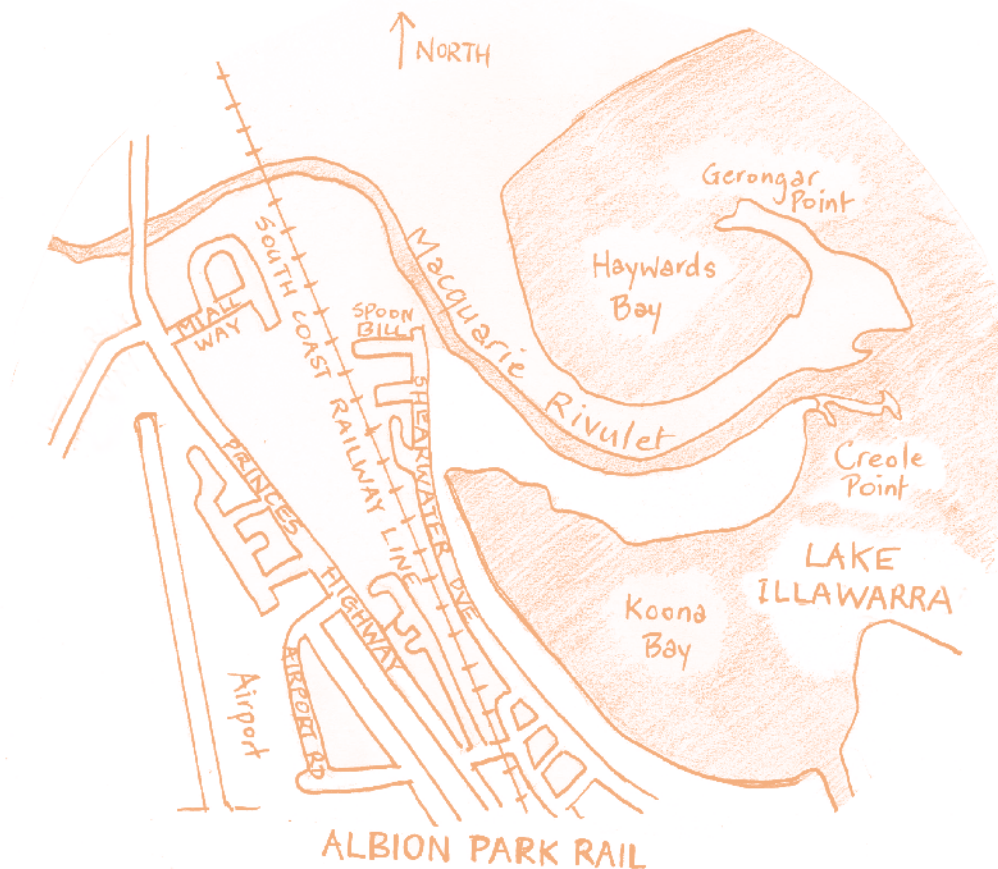
IMPEDIMENTS

TOOLS

The Macquarie Rivulet is a long winding creek with headwaters high in the escarpment near the Macquarie Pass. At its mouth the creek flows into Lake Illawarra via a long curved peninsula which divides Haywards Bay and Koon Bay, at the northern edge of Albion Park Rail. Much of the creek's journey bisects farmland between the Macquarie Pass, and the rural areas of Tongarra, Tullimbar and North Macquarie to the M1 motorway. From the motorway to the creek mouth there is a light industrial estate, some small landholdings, residential housing and a mixture of Council and private waterfront property.


There is no easy access to the mouth of Macquarie Rivulet. To begin walking upstream, head north from Albion Park Railway station or drive to the small carpark at the corner of Shearwater Boulevard and Spoonbill Place. Fenced private properties prevent the walker from walking further downstream towards the mouth of the creek.


Head upstream along the bike track, which flanks the southern side of the creek. To the left are flood-prone horse paddocks. Here the bike track passes through pleasant groves of native bush regeneration. While on the bike track be mindful of



speeding MAMILs who may suddenly appear from around a bend. Follow the track under the railway line. Continue under the motorway to Darcy Dunster Park. This waterside park is set in a curious location, sandwiched between the motorway and Albion Park aerodrome. A picnic can be accompanied by splendid views of light planes passing overhead and the hum of nearby traffic.

Farmland lies to the west of Darcy Dunster Park.

To continue walking upstream, follow the small foot track through long grass at the end of the park. This short track follows the creek line towards a fenced paddock. The fence has a Keep Out sign and an electric fence, so we do not recommend you pass through here (however, there does appear to be a large enough gap under the fence for a human body to pass through with care).  Skirt along the edge of the paddock near the creek. At the end of this paddock Frazers Creek runs into Macquarie Rivulet from the south. Frazers Creek is too deep to cross, so walkers are compelled to follow this creek until a crossing can be found. These paddocks are part of a dairy farm, so at some point there may be an encounter with a small herd of friendly cows and a milking shed which is on Terry Street, Albion Park.

Our walk ends here. Heading upstream, Macquarie Rivulet traces a meandering path through farmland all the way to the bottom of Macquarie Pass, where it is then enveloped in forest to its headwaters up near the top of the Pass. To reach the top, an intrepid walker would need to manage a great deal of mild trespassing and fence climbing with possible electric shocks to follow the creek line through the environs of Tullimbar and Tongarra, before negotiating the steep forested terrain of the creek's upper reaches. 

Duck Creek

2.5
HOURS*
*including drive
to upper reaches




TIME

GRADE

IMPEDIMENTS



TOOLS

Duck Creek originates in the escarpment to the west of Marshall Mount, a rural locality inland from Yallah. The creek runs down a steep gully and snakes its way in a roughly easterly direction through farmland until it reaches the motorway. From there it slips underneath the motorway then through land owned by Energy Australia. Duck Creek runs into Lake Illawarra, just north of Haywards Bay.

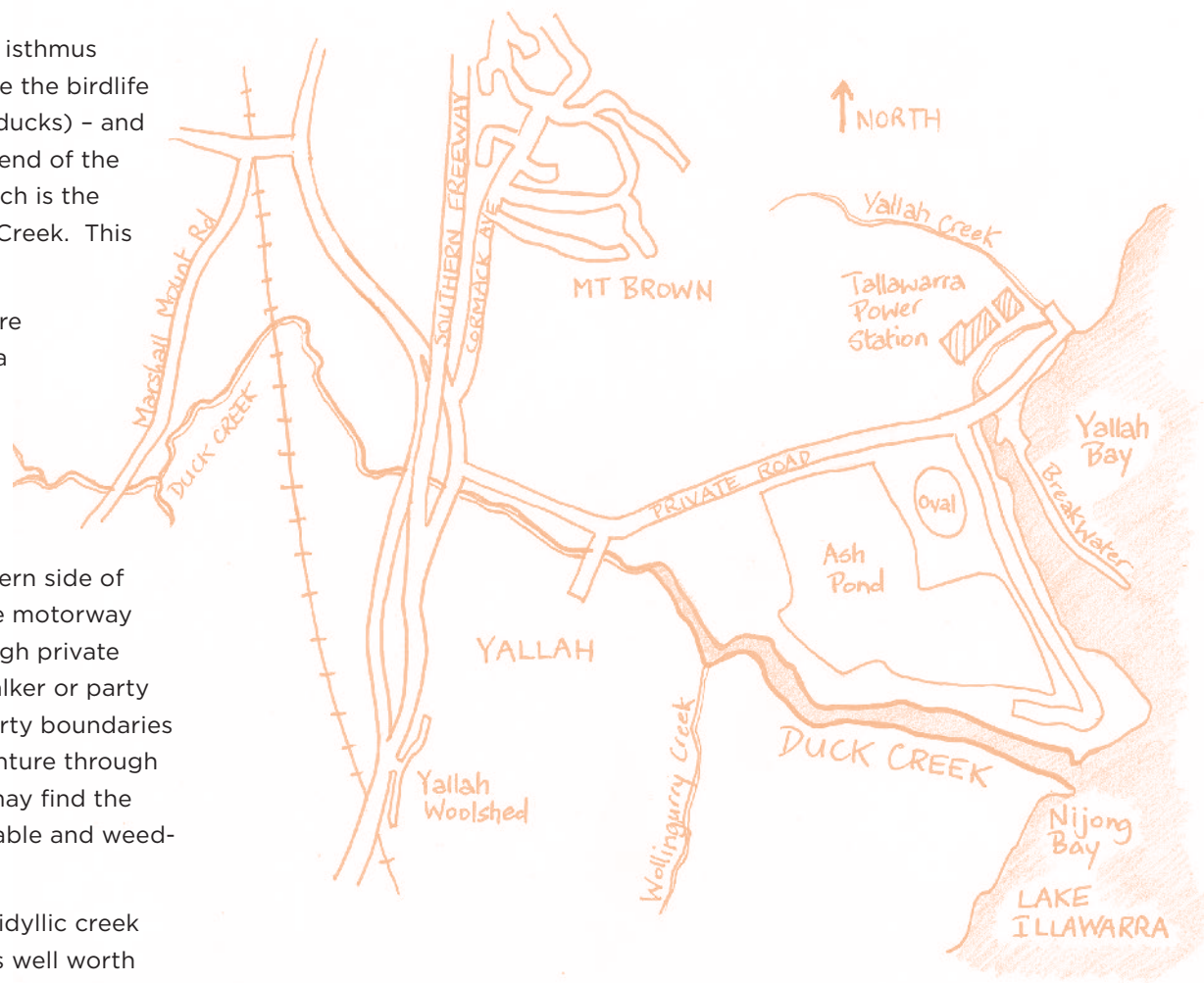
There appears to be no direct public access to the mouth of Duck Creek other than by canoe or boat. 

By car, travel along the Princes Highway south of Dapto and turn into Yallah Bay Road. This road passes many locked gates with Energy Australia "no public access" signs. These are the roads which could be taken directly to the creek if you were an Energy Australia employee. For everyone else, follow Yallah Bay Road to the end, where there is a carpark at Tallawarra Power station, situated on the lake. It is worth spending a little time here as the power station pumps out warm water which is attractive for some fish species and for many humans who like to go fishing there. Flathead are a popular catch in the cosy waters around here. The regurgitated water from the power station runs out to the lake via a canal, artificially constructed with

a long breakwall. Walk out along the isthmus formed by the breakwall to appreciate the birdlife – there are many waterbirds (but no ducks) – and the vistas across Lake Illawarra. The end of the isthmus is near Wollingurri Point which is the northern flank of the mouth of Duck Creek. This area of the lake is called Nijong Bay.

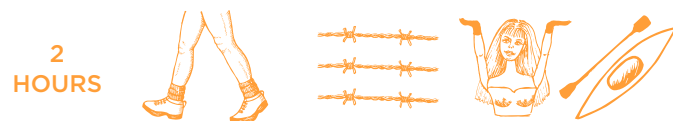
Duck Creek is perhaps one of the more difficult creeks to walk in the Illawarra because of the prohibited access along its length.  Near the lake it is either bounded by the aforementioned Energy Australia landholdings on the northern side or private property on the southern side of the creek. On the western side of the motorway the creek is running exclusively through private property. It is up to the individual walker or party of walkers as to whether these property boundaries are observed. Should the walkers venture through any of these boundary fences, they may find the land near the creek alternately navigable and weed-choked. 

Although Duck Creek may not be an idyllic creek walk due to the restricted access, it is well worth tracing this creek to its headwaters. Driving north along the Princes Highway towards Dapto, take a left turn into Huntley Road, then another left soon after into Marshall Mount Road. This road follows the creek line, heading in a south-westerly direction through low-lying farmland, with horses, cattle and sheep dotting the paddocks. After several kilometres, take a right turn into North Marshall Mount Road, which ascends along the valley



bisected by Duck Creek. The road terminates at the property "Hillview", with the escarpment looming impressively close. It is here, up in the surprisingly pleasant rural environs west of Marshall Mount, that you may encounter several hundred ducks.

Mullet Creek



2
HOURS

TIME GRADE IMPEDIMENTS TOOLS

Although human impediments make Mullet Creek something of an effort to walk, it is well worth exploring. To have a continuous experience of its lower reaches, this creek is probably best travelled in a canoe, as the section from the mouth at Lake Illawarra to William Beach Park Reserve in Dapto is relatively wide and unimpeded. This entry describes two starts to the walk.


The Wollongong Council library website says: 'The name Dapto is said to be an Aboriginal word either from "Dabpeto" meaning "water plenty", or from "tap-toe" which described the way a lame Aboriginal chief walked. Aborigines called the area "Mookoonburro" meaning "grub"'.

The headwaters of Mullet Creek are under the escarpment near Avondale. Mullet Creek winds its way in an easterly direction before trending north at the southern end of Dapto township. At Darkes Road the creek trends east again, flowing under the Princes Highway and Motorway before bending to the south-east to flow into Lake Illawarra between Berkeley and Kanahooka.

To begin walking upstream from the mouth of Mullet Creek, park at the bend of Murra Murra Road Kanahooka, where there is a small carpark and

playground next to the lake. From there a wide concrete walking path heads north along well-tended lawns fringing the lake. From this vantage point the secluded suburb of Primbee can be seen across the water. Follow the path for about 300 metres, keeping to the right hand fork until the mouth of Mullet Creek is reached. There may be some discarded furnishings there, positioned for a relaxed afternoon of fishing or for simply gazing at the watery surrounds. Cormorants and pelicans are a common sight, as well as egrets, spoonbills and herons.

From the mouth, head upstream along the southern side of the creek, either through the thick stand of casuarinas or the concrete path nearby. A wooden jetty about 200 metres upstream offers a pleasant interlude. Continue upstream, skirting along the back of fenced paddocks, then hugging the creek edge on the foot-track. Lantana abounds nearby. Across the creek cows graze on the floodplain. The first impediment is a small inlet, which can be crossed by utilising the suspended fence over the water. This however leaves the walkers blocked from proceeding further, as a tall cyclone fence which runs right into the water is on the other side of the inlet, preventing unwanted passersby from enjoying the creek. It leaves walkers with little choice but to backtrack.

The next access point is on the north side of the creek. From Kanahooka, head north along the freeway for a short distance and turn east to Northcliffe Drive, Berkeley. Turn right to Hooka Creek Road; head to the end and park near the baseball field. Nearby is a large metal gate with a human-sized opening in the bent metal bars.  From here it is an easy amble through the open paddock



to the creek and fairly soon the freeway is reached, which the creek passes underneath.

There are two options here. The safest is to return to the car in Berkeley and drive across to William Beach Park Reserve in north Dapto and continue upstream from there. The other is riskier: from the creek head up to road level and cross the freeway, a bold move which should be done with great caution as the traffic moves very quickly. Stay on the verge of the northbound lanes in order to walk against the traffic on the shoulder, back to the southern side of the creek. Leave the freeway once you can gain access to the south side of the creek. Soon you will find that there is an easement between the creek and the cow paddocks, making the going fairly easy. There are two small tributaries to cross, one with fallen logs to ease the way and the second with a steel L beam firmly balanced for a more exciting crossing.

It's perhaps a kilometre between the freeway and William Beach Park Reserve, a park situated on a horseshoe bend of the creek, popular with locals. This would be the ideal place from which to launch a canoe. 🛶

From here, exit the reserve on to Prince Edward Drive. Reaching Kanahooka Road, turn right then cross the Princes Highway at the roundabout and enter Darkes Road. Walk along Darkes Road, crossing the railway line and passing Dapto Community Farm. Immediately after the road crosses over the creek, you may choose to climb through the barbed wire fence to the left into the paddock and head south, keeping close to the creek.

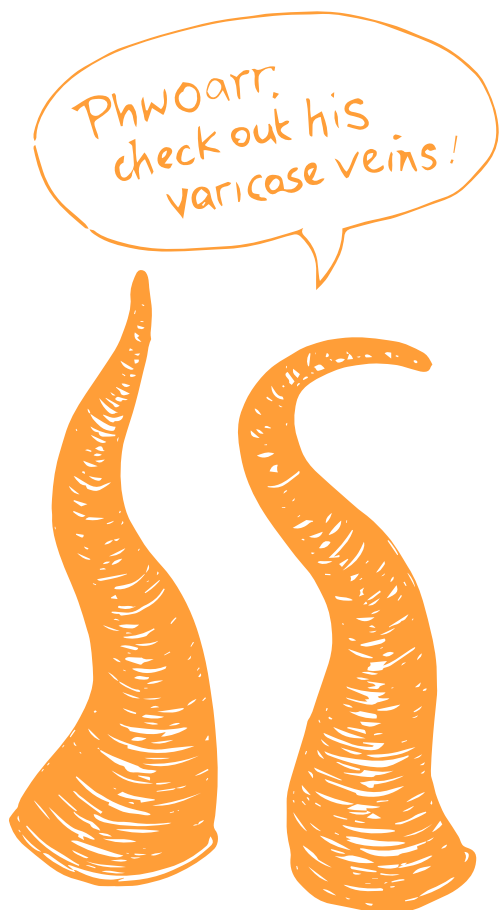


At the end of this paddock, cross the next railway line and follow the line west for about 100 metres until it is possible to enter the next paddock, keeping the creek always on the left while heading in a south-westerly direction. From here it is fairly easy going, through open paddocks, some with cattle, others appearing abandoned for future housing development. The creek side is thickly populated with many weed trees. Several paddocks are crossed before the creek splits, at which point walkers are compelled to remove shoes and socks to make a relatively easy crossing at a narrow pinch at the fork. After this crossing a single long paddock takes the walkers to Bong Bong Road.

Crossing the road into Reed Park, the creek can be followed south. Another small creek enters from the west, but it can be crossed fairly easily to regain

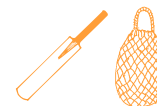
access to Mullet Creek. At this point our walk ends, however the intrepid walker can continue on Mullet Creek for a much greater distance. Although the creek passes through what appears to be mainly private land, the way is fairly clear for several kilometres, until the creek eventually bends westward up into the forested escarpment.

LEECH SMUT



Brandy and Water Creek


1.5
HOURS



TIME

GRADE

TOOLS

Brandy and Water Creek is one of a system of creeks which ultimately flow into Allans Creek and run out to sea through the Steelworks into Tom Thumbs Lagoon. It meets with American Creek in Figtree, not far west of the O'Briens Road and Princes Highway intersection. Brandy and Water Creek, though not without some rubbish and pollution and plenty of weeds, is in some ways one of the cleaner-looking creeks to be encountered in the Illawarra. 

To walk upstream, start from the bottom of O'Briens Road, Figtree. At the first roundabout there is a footbridge to the left which crosses the creek. Cross this footbridge to the southern side of American creek. There is quite a lot of open green space in this section, so the going is easy. Here the creek is a deep, wide cut through the surrounding land, with steep banks. The profile of the creek suggests that there are big flows at times which cause significant erosion. There is a distinct floodplain around this waterway and the grass is spongy with damp soil underfoot. Locals say that the floodplain gets a drenching on average once a year when there is enough rain to break the creek banks.


Fairly soon the way is blocked by an electric fence



bordering a paddock. To avoid this, skirt around the back of Figtree Private Hospital, then head back to the floodplain. There are a couple of private vegetable patches on the floodplain, showcasing a modest colonisation of the spacious public land and

a practical use of the rich alluvial soil. One of the vegetable gardens is fenced to keep the feral deer out. It has a charming windmill ornament made from tennis ball canisters.

Near the top end of the floodplain, American Creek and Brandy and Water Creek meet. Taking the right fork, head almost due north along Brandy and Water Creek, crossing here and there as necessary. Either side of the creek is bounded by open recreational space along its lower reaches, so walking is easy. Soon the creek runs along the back of the mysterious suburb of Nareena Hills. The houses are quite large and there is a new development of even larger houses on the western side of the creek, which now bisects a valley.

Eventually the open land closes in. There is a foot track through a thick stand of coral trees which may eventually block the walker with the sheer size and number of thorns.  Deer clearly inhabit this area. At the point where it becomes too scrubby to closely follow the creek, a nearby fire trail can be accessed to further explore the area. Soon, however, the fire trail departs from the creekline. The intrepid walker may find their way, perhaps by walking in the middle of the stream, in order to trace the course of this creek. Further upstream the creek flows underneath the infrastructure of the coal storage facility and railway line which moves coal from the nearby Dendrobium Mine. Higher up, Brandy and Water Creek passes near the dirt tracks of the Wollongong Motorcycle Club before turning south-west to its source near Harry Graham Drive at the top of Mt Kembla village.

Byarong Creek (lower)

1.5
HOURS



TIME

GRADE

TOOLS

Byarong Creek is a northern tributary of Allans Creek, which is the major creek that runs down through the Bluescope Steelworks into the sea. This gentle, pleasant walk follows the green recreation corridor along the banks of Byarong Creek west from near Figtree mall to the southern base of Mt Keira.

Begin at the parking lot behind Figgy Bowlo (just off The Avenue). Follow the southern bank of the creek around the cricket ovals, heading in a northerly direction before it curves west at the far end of the parkland. On the opposite banks of Byarong Creek, a well-tended olive grove at the Hellenic Club is visible. Slip through the eye doctor's grounds (unfenced) to a bridge at the Princes Highway. Cross to the other side of the road and continue across parkland on the southern banks of the creek to the turning circle dead end of Arrow Avenue. Follow the small lane that heads west between houses to a soccer oval. Turn right at the white boundary fence and head back down to the creek.

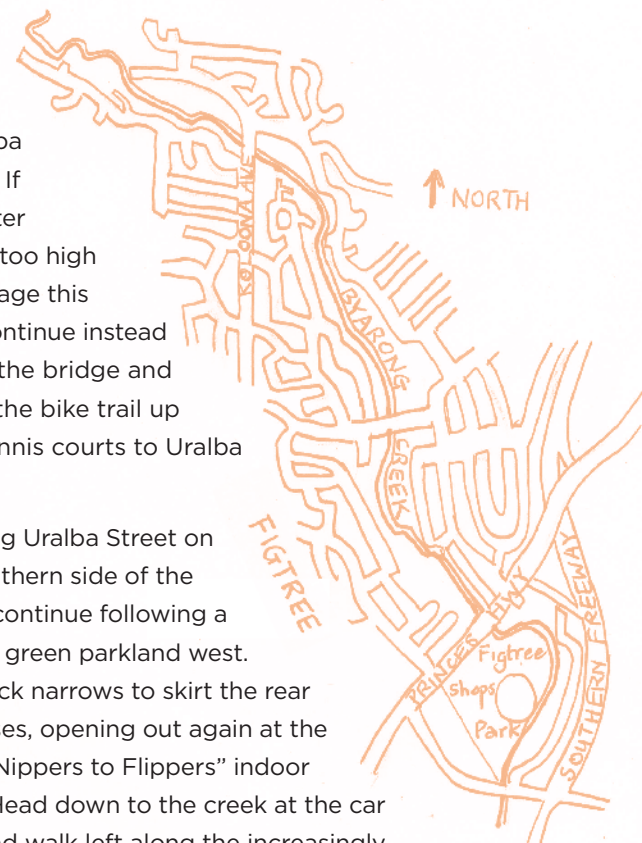
Carry on west along Harry Graham Park past a children's play area to a metal footbridge. If the water is not too high, descend to the creek on the southwestern side, climb a small incline and follow the foot track that continues westerly along the creek

to Uralba Street. If the water level is too high to manage this then continue instead across the bridge and follow the bike trail up past tennis courts to Uralba Street.

Crossing Uralba Street on the southern side of the creek, continue following a strip of green parkland west. The track narrows to skirt the rear of houses, opening out again at the small "Nippers to Flippers" indoor pool. Head down to the creek at the car park and walk left along the increasingly narrow gabion wall bank until emerging at a bike trail. Follow the she-oak shaded trail along to Koloona Avenue.

Cross the road and turn right to cross a bridge. Turn left just after the bridge to follow a foot trail along the top of the steep concrete creek bank to another area of parkland behind houses. The parkland broadens further west into a large grassy area and then follows a pretty section of creek line behind houses to where the walk finishes at the end of Koloona Avenue.

Walkers may wish to retrace their steps here back to the Figtree Mall area or continue ahead along the remarkable Upper Byarong Creek walk (see page 28).



Byarong Creek (upper)

3
HOURS



TIME GRADE IMPEDIMENTS TOOLS

This beautiful and challenging adventure is the continuation of the Byarong Creek (Lower) walk (see page 26). It follows the creek from the western fringes of Figtree/Mt Keira up to the Girl Guide Camp (halfway up Mt Keira) through a particularly verdant section of Illawarra rainforest. The walk is unmarked and involves extensive boulder scrambling across often wet and slippery rocks. Avoid this walk during rain or in the weeks following substantial rain. A short length of stout rope with looped handholds and footholds may come in handy in sections.



Park near the turning circle at the end of Koloona Avenue, Mt Keira. Cross Byarong creek at the stepping stones and follow a track northwest that skirts the rear of houses on the southern side of the creek for a few hundred metres. The track quickly deteriorates after an open stormwater drain on the left. Continue through some lantana until a more open section of creek line is visible down to the right. Head down to the creek and follow the northern side as it loops around a large private yard. Cross the creek just as it turns back to the east and traverse a short gully section to a large grassy paddock. Walk in a northerly direction to a barbed wire fence on the opposite side. An old citrus tree bearing surprisingly delicious fruit is visible 10 metres or so to the west as you walk across the paddock.



Exit this paddock, descend to the creek and cross to the other side. Follow the creek up into the increasingly densely forested escarpment. Cross back and forth from one side to the other as necessary until reaching a set of tall boulders and a small pool. Follow the southern side of the creek and a small track to ascend the left side of

the boulders. Continue along the creek for several hundred metres until a clear T junction is reached. The left fork leads up a small rock slide, and along a lovely shale gorge to a 15 metre waterfall. It then continues up over further cascades to beneath Robertson lookout. It's worth wandering up to the waterfall just to have a look, but return to the T Junction as this account follows the righthand fork (Byarong Creek proper).

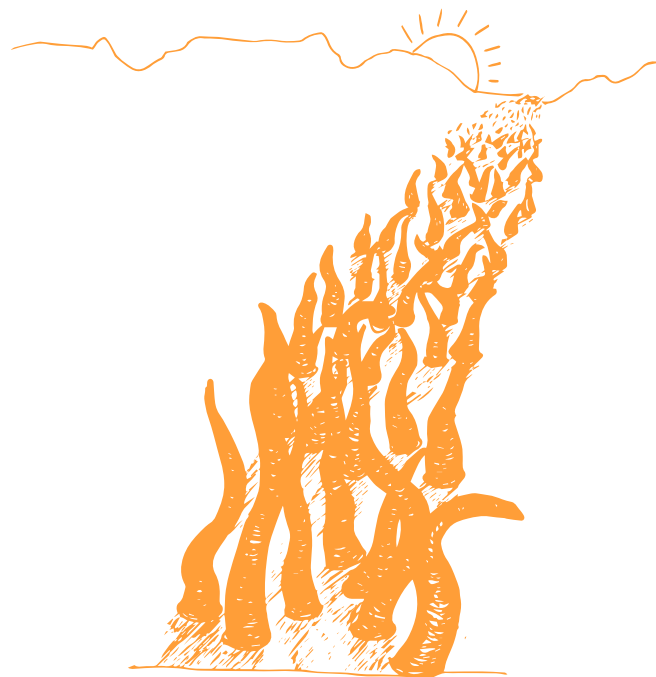
The next 100 metres or so is the trickiest part.

 Follow the creek northeast and ascend either on the left or the right of a small set of cascades to a confined section with a shallow pool and steep rocky sides. Traverse left just above the level of the pool to a narrow boulder chimney. It is probably easiest to climb the chimney with back against the right boulder and feet on the left wall. This is the section where a rope may prove useful for less confident rock scramblers. 

Continue up the creek, scrambling over mossy rocks and detouring here and there up into the forest as necessary. Eventually - after a difficult half an hour or so - reach a tall and severely overhanging boulder on the left side of the creek. From here it is only another fifteen or twenty minutes until a small parallel gully on the left (with some rock cairns) indicates a rough, steep way up to the Girl Guide Camp. There is no clear track, but the route ascends at heading roughly 30 degrees west of the creek direction and reaches a large grassy open area with a brick camp building. Watch for snakes basking in the sunshine in the grassy clearing.

Now it is just a matter of returning along roads to the cars. Walk east out of the Girl Guide Camp, crossing Byarong Creek at a bridge, and up past wooden

camp buildings to the large metal entrance gates on Mt Keira Road. Turn right and follow the road down past Byarong Park, the Fire station and the Mt Keira Demonstration School. Turn right again at Yates Avenue. Head down through a 45 degree bend and turn right at Morandoo Avenue, then left after a few hundred metres at Turama Street. Descend a short distance to Koloona Avenue - with the cars a short distance to the right.



LEECHES of the ILLAWARRA

Fairy Creek

4-5
HOURS



TIME GRADE IMPEDIMENTS TOOLS

This walk provides a classic ramble. It follows an elusive creek system through central Wollongong all the way up to the summit of Mt Keira. There are plenty of detours, a number of dead ends and the odd section of gorgeous creekside land.

Fairy Creek is the more southern of two major creeks that flow into North Wollongong lagoon. The other creek is Cabbage Tree Creek (see page 38), which flows down from the northern side of Mt Keira through Mt Pleasant and Balgownie. In contrast, Fairy Creek runs from the eastern side of Mt Keira, down through West Wollongong, Gwynneville and North Wollongong. It is actually less a single, distinct creek than a complex catchment system, which is variously depicted depending upon the map consulted.

Begin the walk on the southern side of the lagoon mouth near the Lagoon Seafood Restaurant. Follow the lagoon west past a large children's play area to Squires Way. Walk along the bike track north a short distance to the road bridge for a good view of the lagoon. Then turn around, cross to the western side of the road and head south to the Virginia Street turnoff.

There is a small park on the right (with a railway engine) a few metres along Virginia Street. Follow it down to Fairy Creek. Until recently there was an illicit

wire and wood suspension bridge here, but it was washed away in recent (early 2017) floods. Assuming that it has not been replaced, head back and continue south along Virginia Street past apartments to Bourke Street. Then turn right and head down to the Princes Highway, with good views of Mt Keira along the way. Turn right again at the highway and cross Fairy Creek. Continue past the North Wollongong Pub. Just past Achilles Avenue cross to the western side of the Princes Highway at lights. Continue west to North Wollongong Railway station and follow the pedestrian bridge to the other side.

Walk along Porter Street (the road on the western side of the railway station) south and then west to Crawford Avenue. Turn left and cross a Fairy Creek tributary at a small bridge. It is worth noting that Google Maps represents this as Fairy Creek proper, while local catchment maps indicate that Fairy Creek is actually a bit further south. The whole area is Fairy Creek catchment so this is not a big issue, but be aware that this description follows the more meandering southern tributary. Continue south along Crawford Avenue until just before it turns west, then turn left on a bike trail to another Fairy Creek crossing. The bike trail leads through to Hay Street. Follow Hay Street south to Gipps Street and then right to another Fairy Creek bridge. By this stage the creek has become little more than a wide concrete drain.

Cross to the other side of Gipps Street and follow the narrow open drain in a south western arc past Beaton Park Leisure Centre, beneath a small bridge and through a shady copse to another low concrete creek crossing. Turn left and walk 10 metres up to the Leisure Centre Road and then right to Foley

Street. Cross Foley Street and head southwest at the Wiseman Woodland sign to the concrete drain that is the continuation of Fairy Creek. Follow the creek on the southern side to Saunders Oval and then south to another large drain outlet. Ascend on the left side of the outlet and then turn right to follow a rear fence line to a small car park. Continue west to a footbridge across Fairy Creek.

Walk straight ahead in a westerly direction along a corridor of public parkland. After a hundred metres turn left at a track that descends to another small footbridge and proceeds along a narrow fenced access way to Greenacre Road. Turn right and follow a sequence of Streets that hug the creek line through a swift set of bends - walk left at Rosemount Street, then right at Dempster Street, then right again at David Street and past an electrical power substation to Gilmore Road.

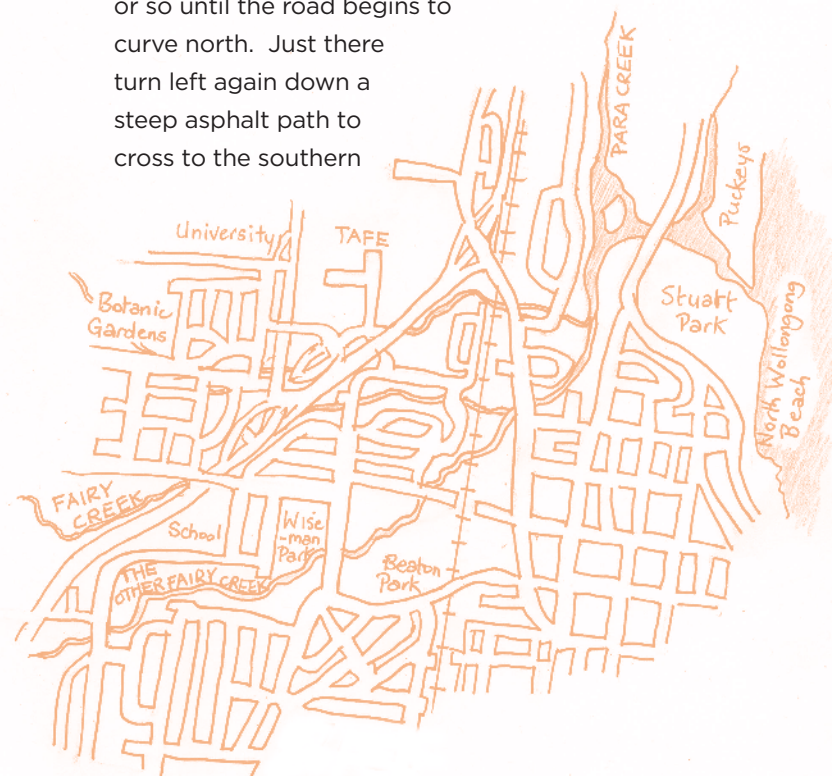
The creek gully is visible just down to the right, but turn left and then cross Gilmore Street to a small park that borders Fisher Street and the southern side of the creek. Head west into the park and down to the creek, which has a very pretty section before a faint trail leads into scrub. The creek here is full of junk - furniture, shopping trolleys, pretty much anything that can be dragged (by kids no doubt) from the side of the road during council junk pick-ups. 🗑️ Continue with increasing difficulty along the creek until you reach a small dam with a gabion retaining wall. 🦿 Use the wall to cross to the other side of the creek and then bush bash leftwards to a large open area with a prominent drain. 🪚

The creekline proper seems to disappear on the

far side of the drain. There is just a muddy, grassy area - a consequence of major earthworks and creek 'remediation' linked to the construction of the Princes Motorway, which lies just to the west. A detour is needed then from here. Follow a trail from the drain northeasterly up and between trees to a park with tennis courts on Reserve Street.

Head left at Reserve Street and walk up over the motorway to Robson's Road. Turn left and descend to another Fairy Creek crossing just after Buckle Crescent. Follow the creek on the northern side until an overhead bridge indicates private land. Pass between nearby flats on the right to Cochrane Street.

Turn left at Cochrane Street and head west 60 metres or so until the road begins to curve north. Just there turn left again down a steep asphalt path to cross to the southern



side of Fairy Creek. Walk along the creek and then up a small hill through some trees to the playing fields of Edmund Rice College. Turn right to meet a lane that runs beside the school up to Keira Oval. The creek appears to disappear here, but actually runs up to the eastern side of Mt Keira.

Walk up to the northwestern corner of the Keira oval grounds and through to Gooyong Street. Turn left and climb the hill to just beyond the entrance to Keiraville Community Pre-School. Then head right via a rough path beside the school to join a tributary that passes up into the escarpment from the end of Gipps Road. Cross to the left of the water pipe and follow the gully northwest for a short way. Just after the last house on your right, turn right and head up the hill.

Two options are available from here. The most straightforward one is to follow the ridge upwards along a small trail until it connects to the network of mountain bike trails that lead up to the old Mt Keira coal mine site. A more complex, but scenic option is to descend steeply down on the other side of the ridge to a prominent creek gully. Follow the creek west to a large boulder and small grotto. Ascend the deer trail at the right to a ridgetop of gnarled trees. Head west up the ridge past boulders and sections of old walls. Follow the ridge for 100 metres or so until a large boulder is visible in the creek on your left. Descend to the boulder and then cross the creek and head up short distance southwest to meet one branch of a larger network of mountain bike trails.

Follow the network of bike trails up steeply for some distance (perhaps 500 metres) until just before a small wooden footbridge, then turn sharply right and head

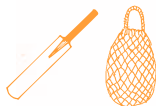
up the hill for 50 metres to reach a paved road. Follow this rightward past old coal mining infrastructure, up a sloping corrugated iron drain to a small bridge and large drain. This directs water off Mt Keira steeply east into the Fairy Creek catchment. Continue north to the Ken Ausburn track. Follow this up past an old coal chimney to a four wheel drive service road. Turn left and walk 200 metres to a hairpin bend on Mt Keira Road, then turn right and join the Mt Keira ring track up a steep set of wooden steps. Shortly after reaching the top follow the track rightwards as it winds past a boulder and then up a short section of stone steps.

A few metres further on at a bench seat turn left and climb up a rocky creek gully. The gully steepens and becomes increasingly narrow. After 200 metres or so a steep clear area appears on the right. This provides an alternative route up to the prominent ridge and then on to the summit. Continue up the creek until it becomes more indistinct and the Mt Keira cliff line becomes visible. Follow the rough trail up to an open corner that links the cliff line to the rightward ridge. An even steeper track leads up this corner to the crest of the ridge, with good views in all directions. Continue up the ridge to the summit lookout fence. Skirt the fence up to the right and then traverse left at the middle tier fence to the large viewing platform – a dramatic end to an iconic creek walk.

If you are in a group, consider ferrying a car up to the summit prior to starting the walk. This provides a quick way down. Otherwise a whole variety of options – from simply retracing your steps to following alternative tracks down Mt Keira and then more direct or indirect roads back to the lagoon.

Cabbage Tree Creek

2
HOURS

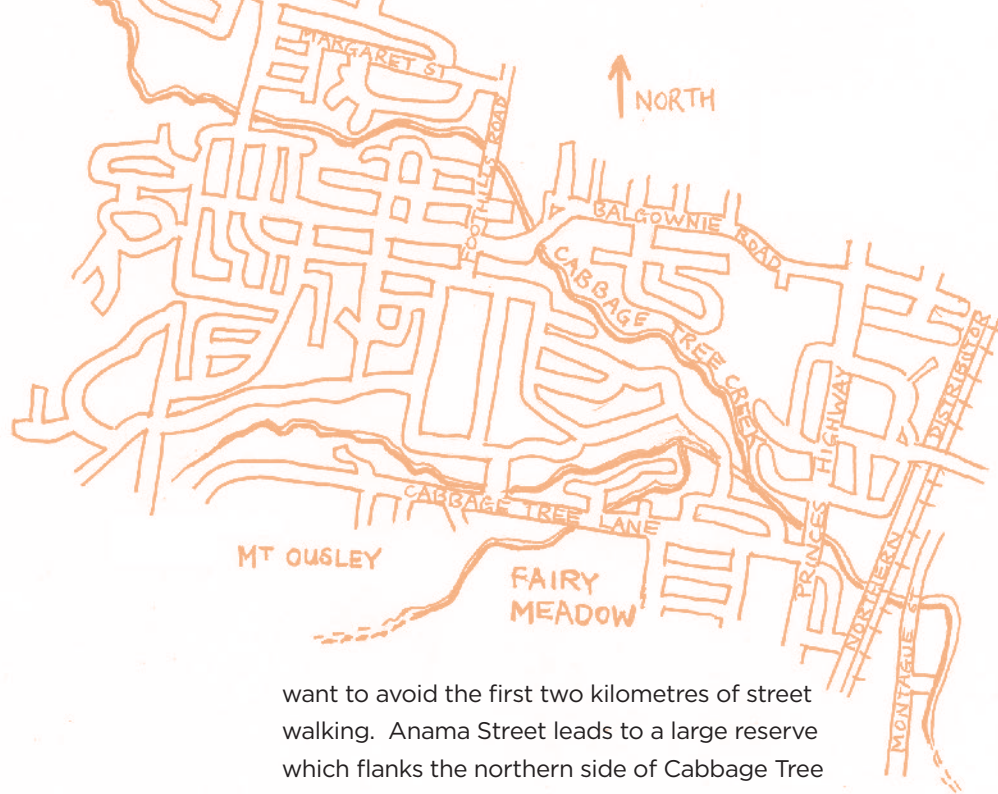




TIME GRADE IMPEDIMENTS TOOLS

The headwaters of Cabbage Tree Creek are high up near the summit of Mt Keira, on the northern side of the mount. The creek traces a large curve northeast through Balgownie before heading east then south east through Fairy Meadow and North Wollongong, eventually joining Fairy Creek just behind Bears Auto Hospital in Montague Street, then flowing as one to the sea through the lagoon at Stuart Park, North Wollongong.

If beginning the walk from the mouth of the creek, be prepared for two kilometres or so of road walking with only occasional glimpses of the creek. Walking through Stuart Park, head north along Squires Way and turn left into Puckey Avenue to cut through the University's "Innovation Campus". A bridge crosses the creek which is flowing north-south at this point. Turn right into Montague Street; after about 400 metres the creek passes under the road as it bends sharply east west. Creek access is difficult, so continue to the end of Montague Street and take Elliots Road over the freeway. Descend the stairs to Clifford Street and follow this past the Fraternity Club to Princes Highway. Cross the highway to Anama Street, immediately north of the Cabbage Tree Hotel.

This is the second possible start to the walk if you



want to avoid the first two kilometres of street walking. Anama Street leads to a large reserve which flanks the northern side of Cabbage Tree Creek for some distance. Follow the open reserve to the creek line. At this point the creek is funnelled along a wide, deep concrete channel replete with rubbish and graffiti.  Ducks wander along the concrete base to find the water. The creek itself is in very poor condition, with a great deal of weed infestation making it difficult to see the waterway when walking along its northern flank.  The green corridor beside the creek however makes for a pleasant amble.

At the end of the reserve, just past the netball courts, cross the footbridge to the south side of the creek, pausing to view the creek from the bridge. The walking is straightforward along the southern side, where there are pleasant stands of native bushland. Backyards about the reserve and various arrangements of furniture allow for relaxed family gatherings by the water. The reserve continues beyond the Balmoral Street and Hopewood

Crescent corner, skirting alongside a horse paddock. A small opening takes walkers on to Balgownie Road. Cabbage Tree Creek flows under Balgownie Road at Donnans Bridge. At this juncture private properties prevent any clear access to the creek, so a detour up Balgownie Road and a right turn into Foothills Road must be taken.

About 300 metres along Foothills Road a bridge crosses the creek. At the bridge it is possible to drop down to the creek line. This option may not be possible during wet periods when the creek level is high. Negotiate a route through the thick vegetation along the southern side of the creek. Backyards squeeze walkers along a narrow steep sided route until a footbridge over the creek is reached. The vegetation closes in next to the creek and backyards closely abut the creek. Cross the footbridge to the northern side of the creek on to Rae Crescent, then on to Margaret Street. Head along Margaret Street toward the escarpment, turn left into Maroota Avenue, then right into Hill Grove and left on to Chalmers Street.

After 100 metres the creek line is picked up. Cross the bridge and turn right into Lang Street. At the point where Lang Street turns left, take the concrete footpath to the right and head along the reserve next to the houses. Cross the small tributary coming in from the south. Here the easiest way to follow the creek is to rock hop along the creek, crossing back and forth. It is possible to rock hop along the creek for several hundred meters until a road crosses over the creek, at which point a scramble up the bank to the road ends the walk. At this point the limits of housing have been reached and the topography steepens. Alternatively, walkers can continue along the creek line deep into the escarpment.

LEECH TACTICS



Towradgi Creek

2
HOURS
ONE WAY



TIME


GRADE

IMPEDIMENTS

TOOLS

This wandering route follows Towradgi creek from the sea to the base of the escarpment at the western fringe of Balgownie. While a number of detours are required due to suburban encroachments, the overall riparian corridor is surprisingly well preserved.

Begin at the creek mouth at Towradgi Park (about a kilometre walk from Towradgi station). There are carparks nearby on both Towradgi Road and Lake Parade. If you have two cars, you may want to leave one car at Doonan Place, Balgownie, to save having to make the round trip back to the start.

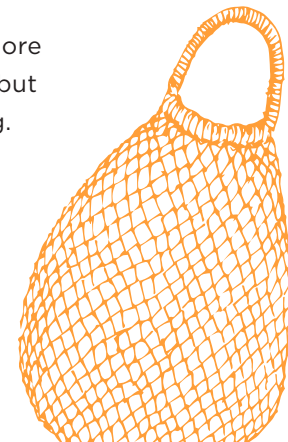
The creek mouth is typically a shallow lagoon popular with children and ducks. Follow the southern side of the creek inland to a pedestrian and cycle bridge and then enter the flanking scrub. Proceed in a west/northwest direction through the regenerated bushland, which is full of curious human artefacts.  The creek is very broad here and private jetties are visible on the other side. After a few hundred metres the land opens out. Make your way through open grassland between the creek and houses. Cross a small reedy creek and just before reaching Cassell Avenue turn right back into the bush again along a track

to encounter a number of unruly tree houses/wigwams made from scrap wood. Continue west along the narrowing creek, with some intimate views of private outdoor settings on the opposite bank. Two hundred metres further along, the creek bends sharply to the south. There is a clear track following the creek bend. A number of rope swings hang from trees above the steepening creek bank.

The creek bends northwest again and meets Pioneer Road. Cross the road and follow the bridge across to the north side. Follow the creek through open parkland then cross again to the south side over Colinga Bridge, a formidable steel interpretation of the escarpment. Here the banks of the creek are supported with gabion walls. Emerge to a cul-de-sac (Colgong Crescent). Follow this road and then cross the green space to walk through a railway culvert. Turn sharp left at the green, swampy field, walking up the hill to skirt along the inland side of the railway line past the houses. Emerge to another cul-de-sac (Carr Street) and follow this around to where it meets Towradgi Road.

Turn right along Towradgi Road and cross Memorial Drive at the intersection. From here two options are available:

1. The first option adheres more closely to the creek path, but is indirect and meandering. Turn right into Dalton Street and follow it three quarters of the way along until a public walkway




between houses is encountered on your left. Take the walkway and then turn right into Henrietta Street, heading towards the green space next to the creek. Pass along the green corridor to the next cul-de-sac (Ziems Avenue) and then walk away from the creek again and back to Towradgi Road and then right to the Princes Highway.

2. Alternatively just follow Towradgi Road straight along from Memorial Drive to the Princes Highway.

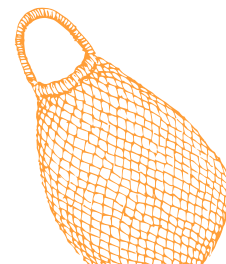
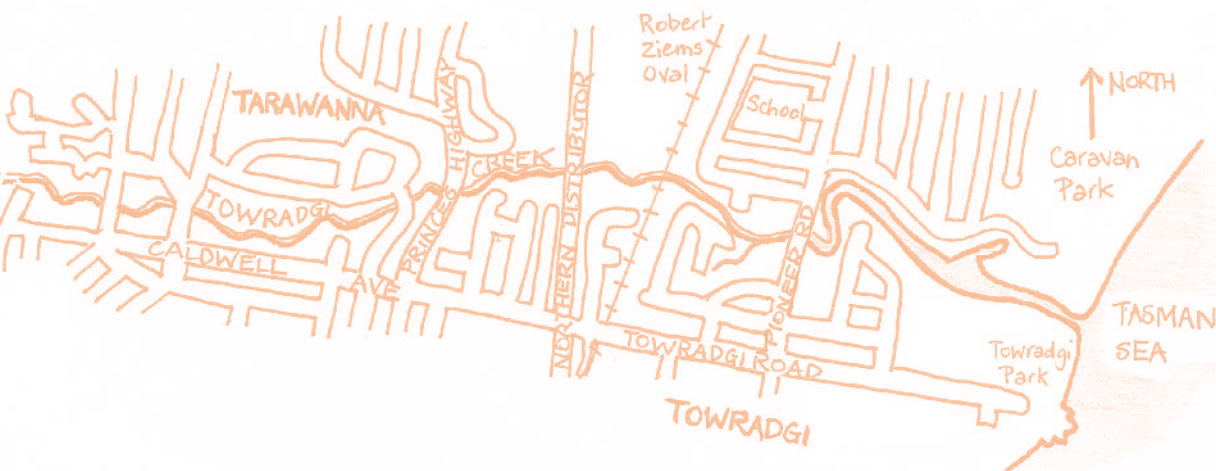
Cross the Princes Highway. Towradgi Road becomes Caldwell Avenue. Shortly afterwards turn right into Charles Road.

Walk north along Charles Road until a section of bush is evident on your left, then follow a path down to the creek line. After about 100 metres of grassland, take the left fork up the bank to the next cul-de-sac (Pringle Road), emerging once

again to Caldwell Avenue. Two hundred metres further along, walk through the vacant block on your right back down to the creek. Just before the road bridge, cross the creek to the northern side to come out on Meadow Street. Cross to Keira Street and follow it up to the electricity substation. Turn left down the easement next to the substation and cross the creek. It is very weedy here, but persist to reach more open land on the south side of the creek. 

Skirt along the outside of a fenced retirement village for several hundred metres to emerge on Foothills Road. The Miners Federation Peace Grove is visible to the right. Skirt around the creek side or the monument through bush to Doonan Place, where the walk ends.

If walkers wish to continue, the headwaters are a further 500 metres west into the escarpment.



Collins Creek

1.5
HOURS



TIME

GRADE

This walk follows Collins Creek from its mouth just north of Collins Rocks in Woonona up into the escarpment. The creek is obscured at the rear of private property in places and makes the usual awkward passage beneath major roads and the like, but is still surprisingly continuous.

Begin at the creek mouth just north of Woonona Rock Pool. Follow the creek inland on the southern side, first on sand and then on the grassy upper level to the bike path and footbridge. Continue on the southern side of the neat riparian corridor to Carrington Street.

It is possible to cross the road here and follow the creek a bit further beside a horse paddock, but the track quickly reaches a dead end, so better to simply turn left at Carrington Street and head south until it becomes Kulgoa Road. Turn right at Kiandra Road and follow it around to Park Road. This is just to remain as close as possible to the creek, which runs just behind the proximate houses.

Turn right at Park Road and follow it across the railway line. Make another right at Kialoa Road,

which leads back to the creek at a small footbridge. There is a temptation here to descend on the northern side and follow the creek inland through thick bush. This is interesting but all too quickly runs into private property, so better to continue across the footbridge north to Copper Avenue and turn left and head up to Thompson Street.

Turn left at Thompson to cross Collins Creek again, which here runs beneath the adjacent Memorial drive. Continue to Park Road, turn right and cross Memorial Drive via the overpass. Turn right and walk to Gray Street. Cross to the northern side of Gray Street at the pedestrian crossing and then follow Sussex Street immediately afterwards on the right back down to the creek.

Proceed along the creek past Woonona High School and across a playing field to the corner of Liddle Street and Nicholson Road. Head west along



Nicholson Street until a small section of Bushcare forest is encountered on your left beneath Woonona Primary School. Unfortunately again, it is hard to find a way through this lush section of creek land due to the inevitable claims to private property, so easiest just to continue along Nicholson Road to the Princes Highway.

Turn left at the highway, cross the creek again at some flood prone old houses and walk back up to Gray Street. Cross the Princes Highway and head inland along Woodland Avenue to Red Ash Drive. Turn right here, cross the road and head down towards the creek. Turn left on a track just before the bridge and follow it along a narrowing track behind houses to an area of parkland and a small lake.

Continue ten metres or so along bush until a small track is evident that descends down to the creek. Follow this back to the northern side of the creek via boulders and some wooden planks. Turn left at Blackwood Place and walk the short distance up to number 22. Then head back down and across the creek via a rough track and walk upstream to an area of grassy parkland beneath houses. The park is colonised with BBQ areas, playgrounds and small, private sporting ovals. Follow the edge of the creek up into the escarpment bush.

There is scope to continue all the way up to Lower Escarpment Fire Trail and beyond, but a final escape into Woonona Heights is available via a small clearing above the southern side of the creek that connects by a small fire trail to Hollymount View. From here there are many different ways back down to buses, trains and cars.

Hewitts Creek



TIME	GRADE	IMPEDIMENTS	TOOLS
<p>Hewitts Creek is one of the many creeks in the northern suburbs of Wollongong flowing from the steep escarpment. There are a number of forks along this creek, so care must be taken to follow the correct creek line.</p> <p>Begin the walk on the southern side of the creek mouth at the northern end of McCauleys Beach. Crossing over the bicycle path, enter the mostly native scrub next to the creek, where there is a negotiable route. Here the creek is wide and it is worth pausing to watch occasional ducks ply their route along the waterway. You may also encounter signs of human habitation, such as improvised furniture arrangements, and bongs. 🍷 In two or three hundred metres, as the scrub thickens and becomes weedy, emerge from the scrub to a clear foot track beside the vegetation and follow the track through to a kikuyu-infested clearing. 🗡️ At the end of the clearing head towards the creek, where there are steep sides formed by gabion walls. Clamber down the walls to the creekline, crossing to the northern side up the scrubby banks. Follow the creek line, criss-crossing as necessary through the weedy scrub. Pass under the Brickworks Avenue bridge, followed soon after by the railway culvert.</p> <p>Reaching Lawrence Hargrave Drive, turn right and</p>			



walk along the road, crossing to Lachlan Street. Pick

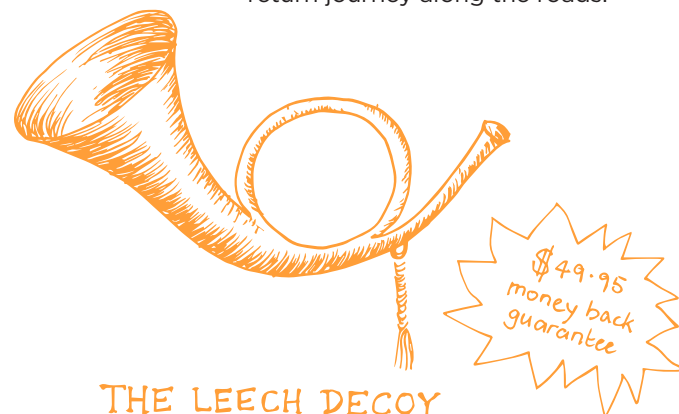
up the creek again 200 metres along Lachlan Street, where it is possible to carefully climb down to the creek bed. This walk was documented during a dry period when the creek was low. From here, heading upstream along the creek bed may not be possible during times of higher rainfall, in which case detours along nearby roads may be necessary.

Follow the creek bed for 200 metres to a fork in the creek. Take the left fork, which is Hewitts Creek. The creek bisects the properties which front on to the parallel Streets of George Street and Lachlan Street. Rock hop and criss-cross along the creek as necessary. Two footbridges are passed, followed by a car bridge. Pass underneath the car bridge, where there is a cosy arrangement of furniture for fun times. Take the left fork of the creek at this point - the right fork becomes Turnbull Gully. Continue along Hewitts Creek, passing underneath many footbridges which connect the backyards of properties on either side of the creek.

Although there is a lot of scrambling and rock

hopping, the route is negotiable when the creek level is low. Here and there flood mitigation works are visible, with sprayed concrete shoring up the rocky banks of this narrow waterway, possibly a response to the 1998 floods which washed away many backyards abutting this creek.

When the gully noticeably steepens, leave the creek bed, climbing up the northern bank to the pleasant Armagh Reserve, an open eucalypt forest between the creek and the houses on the steep hillside. Just beyond the reserve the creek forks again, with Hewitts Creek bending to the south-east beyond the housing limits, eventually passing underneath a property and into the forest two-thirds of the way up Bulli Pass. The walk end at Armagh Reserve, where it is possible to emerge out to George Street and make the quicker return journey along the roads.



THE LEECH DECAY

Standing at a considerable distance from your intended walking route, your assistant blows The Leech Decay for up to ten minutes, sounding a Song of the Sirens no leech can resist!

Stanwell Creek

2.5-3
HOURS



TIME

GRADE

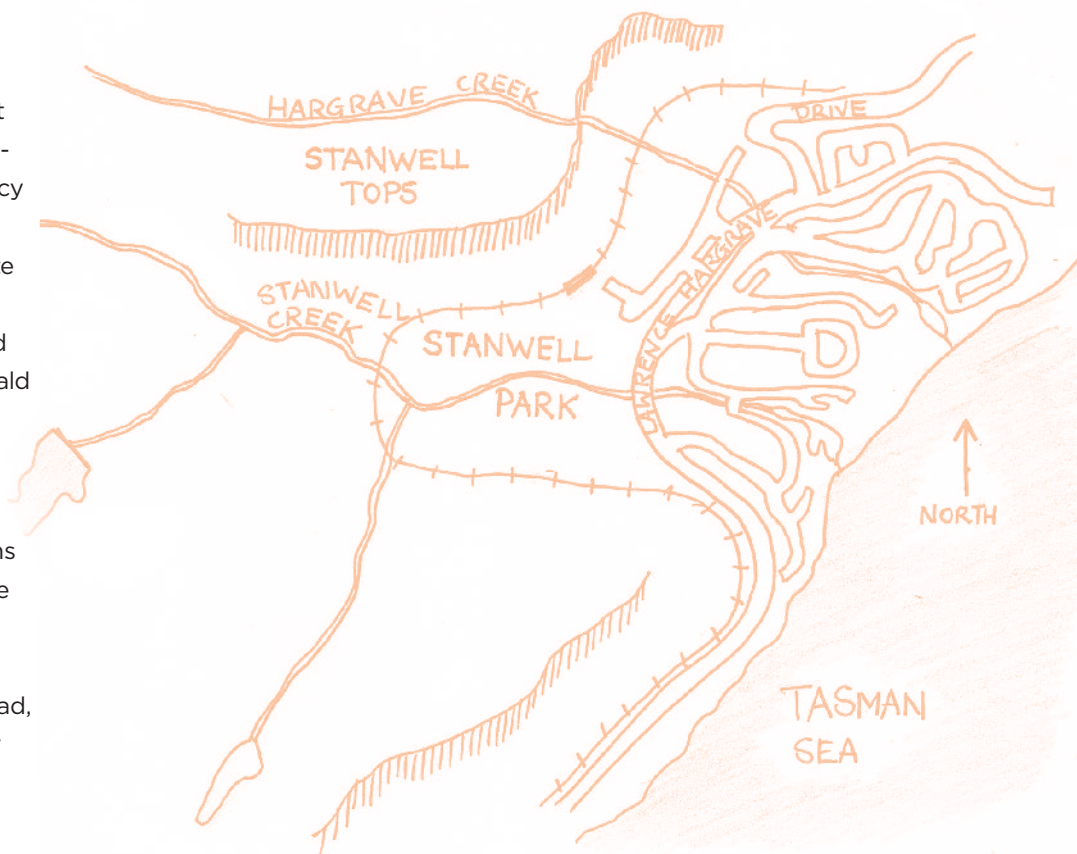
If driving to the start of the walk, park either in the car park near the beach in Beach Road Stanwell Park (on the northern side of the creek) or in a smaller parking area on Lower Coast Road off Murrawal Road (on the southern side of the creek). If walkers are taking public transport, Stanwell Park is the closest railway station, about fifteen minutes' walk to the creek mouth.

The leafy village of Stanwell Park is Wollongong's most northerly suburb, a distinctly wealthy area of large two-storey houses jostling for views of the ocean and privacy amongst the trees. Stanwell Park beach is notoriously gnarly despite its attraction for Sydneysiders, desperate to escape the big smoke for a south coast picnic. Any day with a good southerly will feature hang gliders and paragliders sailing overhead after their take off from Bald Hill. It's hard to imagine living in Stanwell Park for any length of time unless you work in Sydney but don't want to live there, or you love hang gliding.

Beginning at the mouth of Stanwell Creek, which runs out at the southern end of Stanwell Beach, follow the creek upstream. Soon after the parking areas there is a causeway crossing the creek. Cross over to the northern side of the creek. Walking along Beach Road, the road rises fairly steeply. There is a convex mirror attached to a tree on the left side of the road. Soon

after, take the narrow foot track on the left which heads into the bush towards the creek line. (If you pass 14 Beach Road, the house with the round window and inappropriate finials, you've gone too far).

Passing through a grove of tree ferns, walkers will find some deft graffiti on trees at fairly regular intervals. Coming upon a natural pool in the creek, there is a handy rope swing for a cooling dip. The creek is fed into the pool through a brightly graffitied culvert, which offers great sonic possibilities for musicians. Passing through this very satisfying 50 metre long Roman-style culvert, the walker emerges into a landscape where little or no development is visible. Apart from a rusty



disused pipeline and distant traffic noise, there is little to suggest proximity to a suburban neighbourhood.

Beyond the culvert, clamber over rocks and boulders on the creek line. After about 250 metres, the creek bends south-west and flows past a fenced paddock on the left. Follow the fence line. The creek splits in two in this area. Cross to the island in between the two creek branches and walk along the island through the bush. The creek tends north westerly again. A couple of concrete drains on your left are vaguely visible. Soon the bush opens up and you are below a massive viaduct which suspends the South Coast railway line high above the creek. The towering viaduct is a classic Roman structure, modernised only by the perennial graffiti which features regularly on this walk and the scaffolding keeping the viaduct intact.


Beyond the viaduct, the creek is a pleasant jaunt for the walker, scrambling over large boulders with rock pools and small but picturesque waterfalls. About 300 metres beyond the viaduct, the Wodi Wodi walking track crosses the creek. While there is no signage indicating the walking track at this point, there are arrows on trees here and there to point out the route. Turn right off the creek in a northerly direction to the walking track. The narrow track ascends quite steeply and contours around the hillside. Pink surveyors' tape is tied to trees here and there to keep walkers on track.


The Wodi Wodi walking track ends at Stanwell Park Railway station. From there, walkers can make their way back through the streets of Stanwell Park to the starting point. Allow two and a half to three hours for this walk, which includes a lunch break on a nice large boulder somewhere along the creek.

Explanation of Symbols

An explanation of symbols used in this book:

GRADING SYSTEM:


The **walking legs** symbol  : indicates the **degree of difficulty of the terrain**: easy, moderate or difficult, as shown by one, two or three pairs of legs.


The **barbed wire** symbol  : indicates the **degree of difficulty posed by physical impediments** (fences, housing and the like): easy, moderate or difficult, as shown by one, two or three sets of barbed wire.


TOOLS SYMBOLS:


The following symbols indicate specialised tools and equipment that may prove useful on some of the walks. These products are available to purchase from *Upstream Industries™*, the commercial wing of *Walking Upstream: Waterways of the Illawarra*.


Visit our online store at <http://walking-upstream.net/store> to secure yours today:


The **Barbie Wire Spreader**  : separates fencing wires to allow bodies to pass through, and is insulated with rubber to protect from electric shocks. (Trespassing is not recommended in this publication, so use the BWS at your own discretion).

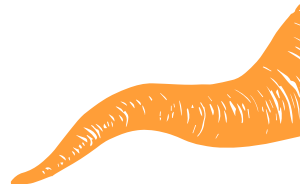
The **Ponting**  : allows the intrepid walker to make progress through the thickest lantana; doubles as a sure-fire run-scorer in a game of backyard cricket.



The **Colonel Mustard**  : is an accessibility accessory - a stout rope with looped knots which allows confident walkers to assist those less able to scramble up steep boulders.

The **Upshit Creek**  : while hardcore creek walkers might poo-poo the use of a canoe to navigate swampy riparian terrain, at *Upstream Industries™* we take a more moderate attitude. We say: “whatever floats your boat”.

The **Good Karma**  : go beyond the bushwalkers’ code of conduct “Take Nothing but Pictures, Leave Nothing but Footprints, Kill Nothing but Time”. With the Good Karma (a handmade string bag crafted from twine) you have a bespoke tool for collecting garbage as you walk, ensuring that you leave the Waterways of the Illawarra in better shape than you found them.





<http://walking-upstream.net>