

## 8: Lyrebird Gully Walk

Mt Kuring-gai to Berowra, one way

### Route:

Glenview Road, Mt Kuring-gai, to Berowra Creek, to Crowley Road, Berowra

Distance: 9 km

Grade: Moderate to hard with two steep sections.

Time: 4 to 6 hours

Track status:

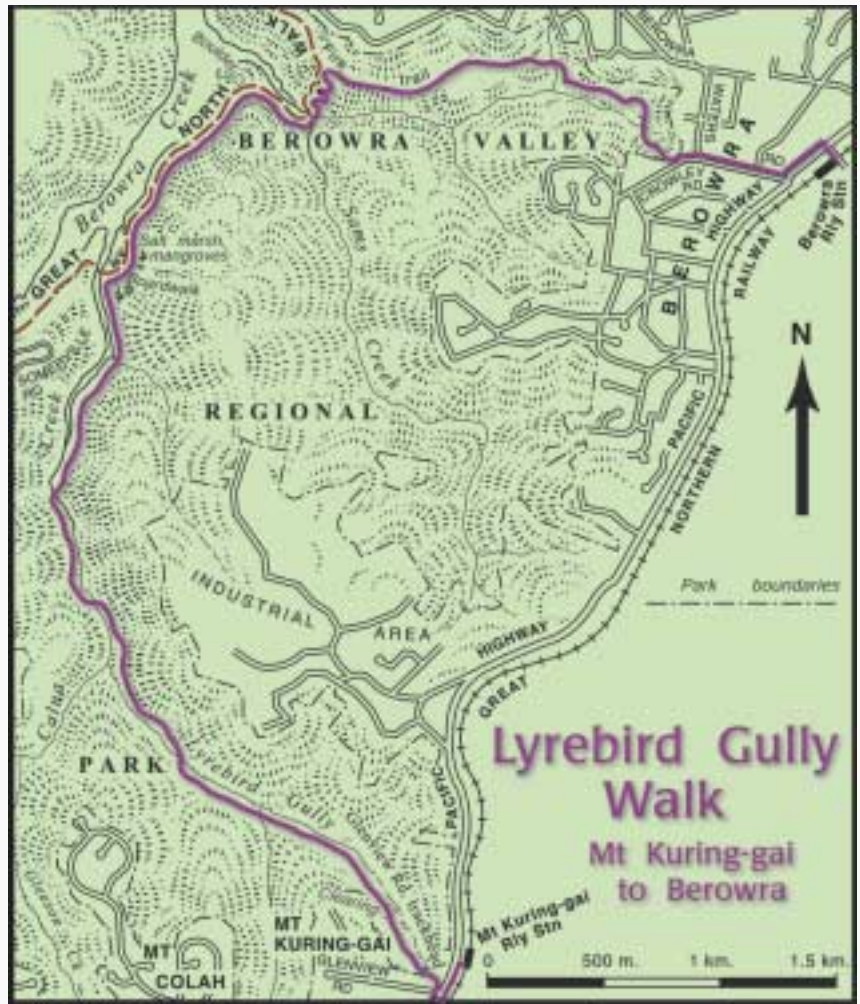
Official marked track

Transport:

Two cars, one at each end; or one, and catch a train at one end; or simply use the train

Starting point:

Trackhead at the traffic-light intersection of Glenview Rd and the Pacific Highway, 100 m south of Mt Kuring-gai station



### Synopsis

Some of the best walking in the Park occurs on this walk between two railway stations. First following Lyrebird Gully then joining Calna Creek and then Berowra Creek, the track passes a twin-log bridge and crosses a salt marsh. After shell middens, a big lookout boulder and mangroves, it continues along Sams

Creek, leaving the valley up zigzag steps for the final stretch to Berowra. As this walk starts and ends near railway stations it is suitable for walkers without cars. For car users, parking is available at both ends. Alternative end points are Berkeley Close at Berowra Heights and Jalah Crescent, Berowra.

## LYREBIRD GULLY WALK GUIDE

### Mt Kuring-gai Station to Lyrebird Gully

The first section of the walk, a half-kilometre, steep, downhill, narrow, sealed road, follows the sewerage line. Weeds soon give way to such native plants as smooth-barked Sydney Red Gums *Angophora costata*, Turpentines *Syncarpia glomulifera*, Grey Gums *Eucalyptus punctata* and Sydney Peppermints *Eucalyptus piperita*, which provide shade over the road. Sandstone boulders become prominent.

The track joins Lyrebird Gully, whose waters you can hear flowing on the right. A flat grassy clearing, occasionally used for

camping, was created from spoil excavated during installation of deep sewer mains. The creek passes through large pipes under this clearing. The Pink Waxflower *Eriostemon australasius*, River Rose *Bauera rubioides* and native peas flower here in spring. Sydney Red Gums are the dominant trees.

At the clearing the path divides. Veer left as it becomes a bush track heading in a north-westerly direction. The track soon crosses a square-section concrete drain by a timber plank footbridge. In the sandy and rocky soil there are *Banksia*, scribbly gums and Red Bloodwood *Corymbia gummifera*. The track continues ever downwards. On the surrounding slopes wildflowers abound, which may include, depending on the season, spring-flowering *Boronia ledifolia*, *Leucopogon*, Lesser Flannel Flower *Actinotus minor*, flaky-barked teatrees *Leptospermum trinervium*, Common Fringe-lily *Thyanotus tuberosus* and ground orchids. This has been a picturesque walk so far, requiring modest agility as the route follows along the steep slope with the creek on the right.

### Creek crossing to the waterfall

After about a kilometre, cross to the right of Lyrebird Gully over exposed sandstone flats and rock pool, with a cascade on the lower side. Black Wattles *Callicoma serratifolia* have started to appear along the creek. Below, the terrain begins to resemble a rainforest, with Coachwoods *Ceratopetalum apetalum*, Forest Oak *Allocasuarina torulosa* and Turpentines. Further on, ferns, tree ferns, grass trees, mintbushes, Black Wattles and Water Gums *Tristaniopsis laurina* abound. A notable feature is a sandstone wall about 75 m long and 2 - 5 m high with overhanging rock. About 100 m later there is a large Sydney Red Gum, the base of which appears to flow over the rocks. The track descends to creek level, where it is joined from the right by a creek bed in a shady glade featuring Coachwoods with their characteristic smooth bark marked with whitish blotches, and ferns.

Soon the path joins the creek bed, almost a potholed highway formed out of the natural stone. The track follows this rocky creek bed, along which there may be signs of flooding. The principal landmark at this point is an 8 m-high overhanging waterfall. Here water falls onto rocks to join a pool below. This is a pleasant place to pause for a while.

### Calna Creek to the log bridge

Leave the creek bed at the waterfall. The track climbs a little away from the creek, and becomes drier. Near the top of the slope, pass under a series of massive eroded rock overhangs that would provide shelter in the wet. A hundred metres or so further on another valley can be seen entering from the left, with transmission towers and lines. This is Calna Creek, the waterflow from which can be heard as you traverse a drier open woodland slope. Somewhere out of sight below, Lyrebird Gully joins the bigger Calna Creek.

After about half a kilometre descend with an abrupt left turn down rough rock steps to what is now Calna Creek. Follow the creek bed lined with Coachwoods, possibly flooded after rains. Cross to the other side of Calna Creek using jumbled and tossed boulders —



Jamie Wright

Common Fringe-lily  
*Thyanotus tuberosus*



Jeremy Steele

Eroded sandstone creek bed



Jeremy Steele

Specification for a hole: a recess, pebbles, plenty of water and heaps and heaps of time



Jeremy Steele

Wonderful range of colours and shapes in eroded overhang

Jeremy Steele



Watch carefully for the track markers that identify the route.

Jeremy Steele



One of the local Water Monitors who may be watching you

Paul Fredrickson



Salt marsh is found in intertidal areas where the sediments are waterlogged by flooding at the highest tides. Where salt marsh does occur, it is usually—although not always—adjacent to and above stands of mangroves. Today, salt marshes in general have declined in extent in urban areas as a result of human influences.

One of the largest of the pockets of salt marsh in the Park occurs at the junction of Calna Creek and Berowra Creek, crossed by the boardwalk.

The animals and plants that inhabit salt marsh areas are highly specialised and low in diversity. This is because they are specifically adapted to salinity and waterlogged soils. Salt marsh is valuable as it provides a food source for estuarine animals and plants, and because it traps sediments and pollutants, so helping to maintain water quality.

somewhat easier said than done. (Look for direction markers on the rocks and trees.)

Rainforest-like conditions continue: look out for Water Vines *Cissus antarctica*, which may hang over the track. The path, sometimes obscured, proceeds along the creek bed over boulders. After several hundred metres, at an idyllic pool, re-cross the creek to the northern, or right-hand, side. A red arrow on a white diamond sign on a rock at the creek's edge confirms the way.

There follows, along this creek under a canopy of trees, what must be one of the best walking stretches in the Park. Waterholes, trees (Water Gums and Coachwoods), ferns, moss-covered rocks and perhaps sunbaking lizards and lyrebirds - hence the name 'lyrebird gully' - are attractions. Over the next kilometre the creek little by little flattens and broadens.

At the start of an open *Allocasuarina*-grove camping area, cross a watercourse by a 1.5 m timber bridge. Continue through the *Allocasuarina*. Eventually the path leaves the creek, and you cross an unnamed tributary. The area close to the junction of Calna and Berowra Creeks is dominated by mangroves<sup>1</sup>, salt marsh and *Allocasuarina* signifying the tidal influence. During king tides the walking track may be knee-deep in water.

Continue through the forest of Black Sheoak *Allocasuarina torulosa*, between mangroves on the left and salt marsh and Swamp Oak *Casuarina glauca* on the right, to the twin-log footbridge. A sign gives the distance and direction of trackheads along the Great North Walk: 4.4 km from Mt Kuring-gai and 6 km to Berowra Waters. This is the halfway point on the Lyrebird Gully walk. Do not cross the bridge, which leads to the Crosslands picnic grounds, but keep to the same side of the creek and follow the arrow to Berowra Waters.

### Calna Creek to Sams Creek

This stretch begins with an 80 m board walk across the salt marsh, dominated by grasses, sedges and succulent plants, and surrounded by *Casuarina glauca* on one side and mangroves on the other. Soon the mangroves become dense on the water's edge.

Somewhere out of sight Calna Creek joins the much broader Berowra Creek. Continue northwards, following the east bank of what is now Berowra Creek. Along this stretch are several shell middens. The creek is now 50–100 m or more across, depending on the tide.

Note the tall grass trees along the path. After about a kilometre there are some large boulders, together with a considerable shell midden testifying to the long term use of this lookout rock by the indigenous people over the ages. This site is protected under the *National Parks and Wildlife Service Act 1974*. The boulders remain an excellent vantage point to view the junction of Berowra and Sams Creeks, and the broadening of Berowra Creek both up- and downstream.

1. For details about mangroves see the information box in Walk 8: Lyrebird Gully.

Over two hundred years ago, in July 1789, Captain John Hunter surveyed Berowra Creek and arrived at 'The Woolwash' just below Sams Creek.

#### Sams Creek to zigzag steps

From the great boulder group, continue in an easterly direction away from Berowra Creek until it encounters Sams Creek. First invisible amongst the mangroves, this creek gradually comes into view on the left as the path, which can flood at high tide, follows up Sams Creek valley.

The sides of the gully rise high to left and right. Vegetation includes Rough-barked Apple *Angophora floribunda*, Forest Oak *Allocasuarina torulosa* and the Lilly Pilly *Acmena smithii* as well as a patch of salt marsh. Mangroves along the creek decrease as the water becomes fresher. There are mullet in the creek, and Chestnut Teal, White-throated Treecreepers and Eastern Yellow Robins may also be seen. This 350 m section includes a flat stretch subject to flooding at high tide followed by a creek-edge walk, at the end of which cross Sams Creek with caution, using the rocky and sometimes mossy ford. (Keep a lookout for the signposts here.)

Negotiate the rocky bed of an unnamed watercourse that joins Sams Creek directly opposite for about 50 m, bearing leftwards. The area is thickly vegetated with Water Gums *Tristaniopsis laurina*, Coachwoods *Ceratopetalum apetalum*, Swamp Oaks *Casuarina glauca* and Common Ground Fern *Calochlaena dubia*. The next stage is the zigzag steps. This is a steep ascent.

#### Zigzag steps to fire trail

Some 260 log and natural formation steps provide the means to climb up another 150 m out of the Sams Creek valley. You leave the rainforest and shaded slopes behind as you climb higher. Smooth-barked Sydney Red Gum *Angophora costata*, Sydney Peppermint *Eucalyptus piperita*, bloodwoods, Christmas Bush *Ceratopetalum gummiferum* and *Banksia* begin to become more common. Shaded rock overhangs support specimens of small ferns and Rock Lily *Dendrobium speciosum*. The steep climb eventually reaches a fire trail. Here it is 3.7 km to Crosslands and 2 km to Berowra station. To go to Berowra Station, turn right as you reach the fire trail.

#### Detour: Naa Badu Lookout

If you travel left along the fire trail for 300 m you will come to Naa Badu Lookout offering a panoramic view over Berowra Creek, where you have just travelled. This is a worthwhile detour as it offers a view of the previously hidden junction of Calna and Berowra Creeks. The name 'naa badu' in the Sydney Aboriginal language means 'see the water'.

#### Link to Walk 9 and Berkley Close

If you were to continue along the fire trail in the same direction you would join the route of Walk 9: *Berowra Waters*, reaching either Berkeley Close or Berowra Waters.



George Foster

The protected site at Sams Creek and the substantial area of midden (below) surrounding it, indicate the long-term use of the location by the indigenous people of the area.



George Foster



George Foster

**Sams Creek and Merrymans Bay**  
According to local lore, Sams Creek was named after a fisherman who lived in a cave overlooking Halfmoon Bay. On the opposite, western, shore of Berowra Creek, just north of Sams Creek, is Merrymans Bay, named after lime burners and shingle splitters who used to sing at their work there.



George Foster

Rock Lily *Dendrobium speciosum* on a ledge high above Sams Creek

Gregor Newton



*Pultenaea elliptica*

Bob Sait



Macropods like the mound building Brush Turkey are becoming more common in the park.

Lyndel Wilson



Ants attending to lerps on the underside of leaves.

Hornsby Shire Council



### **Berowra**

Mary Wall received the first land grant at Berowra in 1879 and by 1895 a tannery was established close to the Crowley Road trackhead. It was 1902 before a road was constructed down to Berowra Waters.

### **Fire trail to Crowley Road and Berowra Station**

In springtime, the numerous wildflowers along this section of the track include Sydney Boronia *Boronia ledifolia*, pea flowers such as *Gompholobium grandiflorum* and *Pultenaea elliptica* and occasional Waratahs *Telopea speciosissima*. The abundance of smooth-barked Sydney Red Gums is emphasised by their pink-tan trunks.

At the Y fork after about a kilometre, keep to the right, following the Great North Walk sign to Berowra Station. (The steep concrete-surfaced left branch of the fire trail leads to Joalah Crescent at the top of the hill, and to residential housing.)

A few hundred metres later, just after crossing a creek underpass, keep straight ahead at the bushwalk marker post, taking the bush track and leaving the fire trail that diverges to the right.

### **Exit to Crowley Road trackhead**

After a small creek is crossed, the track continues east following the southern bank. Re-cross the same creek a little later and head upwards over several broad exposed natural sandstone 'steps'. At the T junction after the 'steps', turn left. Wildflowers in this area include Large-leaf Bush Pea *Pultenaea daphnoides*, River Rose *Bauera rubioides*, Grey Spider Flower *Grevillea buxifolia*, teatree *Leptospermum trinervium*, Lesser Fannel Flower *Actinotus minor* and Sydney Boronia *Boronia ledifolia*.

Several flights of timber and stone steps make the walk easier. A set of eleven metal steps, replacing the original footholds cut into the rock face, announce the near completion of the walk.

A further 450 m later, after a final rise, you arrive at the trackhead in Crowley Road, near the junction with Berowra Waters Road. At the trackhead is an old bush school now used as a community hall.

From the roundabout near the trackhead take Berowra Waters Road east past the sports ground to Berowra station, about 750 m away. Turn left at the junction with the Pacific Highway. The station is at the top of the hill.

The Crowley Road trackhead is on the north west corner of Mary Wall's original sixty acre land grant. Mary is regarded as a pioneer of Berowra: her son Nathaniel was the first white child to be born in the district and the first school in the area was started at her home in 1894. Mary herself was born in County Limerick, Ireland in 1832.

Mary Wall Crescent in the development off Gully Road is named after her.

Rickard Road is named after the developer Arthur Rickard to whom Mary's daughter Elizabeth sold the land in 1910 for 1800 pounds. The land was later divided into 150 lots and sold at auction.

### *Further Reference*

Joffe, M. 1992, *Yarns & Photos, Beautiful Old Berowra & Hornsby to the Hawkesbury*, Sandstone Press, Berowra Heights