

6: Pogson Trig Walk

Pogson Trig return

Start: End of Quarry Road, Dural

Route: Quarry Road, Dural; Tunks Ridge; Pogson Trig; back to Quarry Road

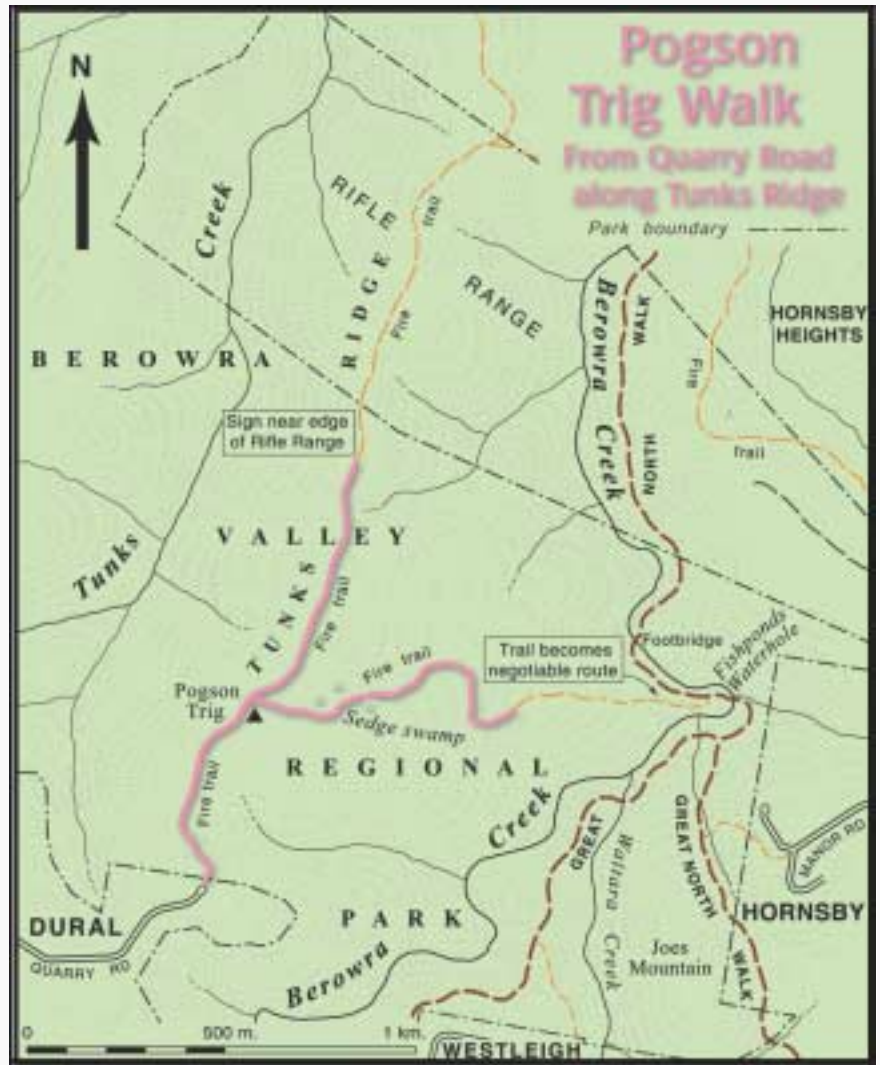
Distance: 2 km

Grade: Easy

Time: 1 hour

Transport: Single car

Track status: Fire trails



Synopsis

The short Pogson Trig Walk is almost entirely level, and follows broad fire trails. It begins at the gate at the end of Quarry Road and arrives at the Trig. From the Trig, it first samples a stretch along the flat section of Tunks Ridge and returns; then it investigates a section of another firetrail running eastwards towards the sedge swamp and returns.

POGSON TRIG WALK GUIDE

Introduction

Quarry Road

The land in the Quarry Road area was originally owned by the Pogson family, orchardists, woodcutters and graziers. Quarry Road, Dural, is named after a white metal quarry situated just after the Rural Fire Services station. White metal, a metamorphosed sandstone, was used as road surfacing as it is harder than blue metal.

The Quarry Road fire trail at the start of the walk was originally a public road or pony track from Dural to Hornsby, used by Dural farmers. Although evidence suggests that drays and other wheeled vehicles may

have taken this route, after the opening of the bridges in Galston Gorge and the expansion of the goods yard at Pennant Hills Railway Station the track became less popular. It is known locally as Tunks Ridge Track for the reason that it follows the ridge separating Tunks Creek on the left and Berowra Creek on the right.

Locked gate to Pogson Trig

Quarry Road, Dural, is off the Old Northern Road just beyond the junction of New Line Road. The walk begins at a locked gate at the end of Quarry Road, and proceeds northwards following Tunks Ridge for about 2.5 km.

Up to 2000, the left-hand or north-western side of the fire trail had not been burnt since about 1970; the south-eastern or right-hand side was burnt in May 1994.

Along the first section the vegetation is typical sandstone heath and scrub woodland. It contains examples of both coastal and mountain plant species. There are two scribbly gums here, the Narrow-leaved Scribbly Gum *Eucalyptus racemosa* and the Broad-leaved Scribbly Gum *Eucalyptus haemastoma*. Since the introduction of the European honey bee there has been some hybridisation of the two. Nearly all the ridges in this area display this intersection of coastal and mountain vegetation.

The scribbly gum on the right hand side of the gate is covered with trails of the larvae of the scribbly gum moth and of termites. As with many other scribbly gums that you will encounter, this specimen was severely damaged long ago, leaving exposed its heartwood centre.

On the left hand side of the fire trail are examples of Silver Banksia *Banksia marginata*, which has clear yellow flower spikes in autumn-winter. Halfway up the slope, which begins at this point, a Hairpin Banksia *Banksia spinulosa* can be seen on the left, together with Old Man Banksia *Banksia serrata*, familiar from May Gibbs's stories of Australian bush flowers and animals.

Heath-leaved Banksia *Banksia ericifolia* is also present, its red-gold flower spikes standing out in autumn-winter against white-backed, deep green leaves. *Banksia oblongifolia*, a shrub about 1 m high with velvety brown new growth, completes the five species of *Banksia* that occur in this section. This area is one of the best places in the Park to see *Banksia*.

Further along, the Red Spider Flower *Grevillea speciosa* and Sweet Wattle *Acacia suaveolens* grow on either side of the fire trail.

Many of the plants are harsh: touch the leaves and you will find that some may look soft but feel tough and prickly.

Pogson Trig

At a small clearing some 500 m after the locked gate, at the point where a track enters from the east, there is a trig station marker. The steel plate on top indicates north. Do not take the track leading off to the right at this stage. Stay on the fire trail, pausing to see the trunk of another scribbly gum set at odd angles.

In the area around the trig marker, Broad-leaved Scribbly Gum *Eucalyptus haemastoma*, as well as Old Man Banksia *Banksia serrata*



Sandra Kainins-Cole

Sweet Wattle *Acacia suaveolens*
one of the Park's many colourful wattles



Jeremy Steele

Broad-leaved Scribbly Gum
Eucalyptus haemastoma



Jeremy Steele

A fine pair of 'bad banksia men' the fruit of *Banksia serrata* showing the gaping "mouths" of expelled seeds. Fire is the normal trigger. *Banksia* cones also behave much like incendiary bombs during wildfires. Violent updrafts lift the fiercely burning cones into the strong winds preceding the fire front, setting more spot fires.



Jeremy Steele

The Pogson Trig station marker

George Foster



Distinctive colouration of a pollinating male casuarina. The leaves of a nearby female tree are difficult to see.

Jeremy Steele



One of the warning signs at the boundary of the Rifle Range Safety Zone

Paul Fredrickson



The carnivorous Sundew *Drosera spatulata* - a beautiful little insect eater

J.Gregor Newton



Juncus continuus, one of the rushes that colonise the "hanging swamps" of the Park

and Heath-leaved Banksia *Banksia ericifolia*, Dwarf Apple *Angophora hispida* and Conesticks *Petrophile pulchella*, predominate.

The trees are widely spaced with a medium cover of shrubs underneath. Soon the fire trail passes through bushland where the shrubs become very dense. This may be due to an increase in water availability at this point.

All Australian plants are grey-green - or are they? Notice how many bright green plants there are, and that it is mainly the leaves of the eucalypts, the gum trees, that are grey-green. This colouring is often due to a coating of white wax that can be scraped off to reveal a bright green leaf underneath.

The small tree with fine branchlets and woody, brown, seedbearing cones is Black Sheoak *Allocasuarina littoralis*. It has male and female plants, only the female having cones. When the male plants produce pollen, the plant looks brown all over as if it were dying, but this is just the pollen-producing structures.

The fire trail follows the ridge for some distance, and is fairly flat.

WALK TURN-AROUND

Boundary of Hornsby Rifle Range Safety Zone

When the fire trail reaches the Rifle Range Safety Zone a warning sign identifies the boundary. Turn back now.

The Fire Trail does continue for authorised users only along Tunks Ridge to Galston Gorge. See Chapter 5: Management for further information about the dangers of crossing the Safety Zone.

When you arrive back at Pogson Trig, take the track on the left.

Pogson Trig to Sandstone swamp

The final several hundred metres from Pogson Trig are marked not only by *Banksia oblongifolia* but also by small red rosettes close to the ground. These are carnivorous plants that eat insects trapped on the reddish leaves, and which are digested there by secretions from the leaves. Sundew *Drosera spatulata* is the name of the most common of them. If you look closely, you will see the remains of its last meal. As well, at all times of the year you can see the Lesser Fannel Flower *Actinotus minor*, similar to the well-known Fannel Flower but only about 15 mm in diameter.

The sandstone swamp encountered on the left in about 350 metres is made up of sedges, shrubs, grass trees and small plants. The terrain may be soggy after rains, or dry at other times. At its bottom edge you can walk into it from the right-hand side of the track, using side tracks. Once you enter the swamp you can look right across it. Tracks lead to a flat exposed rock expanse.

The section of about 400 m of the Pogson Trig Track between the Trig and the swamp is reputed to have been constructed in the early 1960s or 1970s, to reach a light-aircraft crash site.¹ The fragility of the swamp is apparent with parallel wheel marks originally made by

1. Attempts to confirm this incident for this edition of the *Guide* were unsuccessful.

the heavy loader when removing the light aircraft still visible decades later. The Bush Fire Brigade afterwards extended this access as a walking track to link up with the Benowie Track at Fishponds, to assist in fire control.

The swamp is the only substantive sedgeland in the Park. It has shrunk by at least half the size shown on a map made in 1970 by Macquarie University botanist Dr Frank Burrows, and local people suggest it was once larger still.

Old pictures show that the sedges are being replaced by shrubs such as *Hakea* and *Banksia*. One reason for this may be a lowering of the water table because of increased drainage along the fire trail. Another may be changes to the fire regime: research on other sedgeland indicates that a regular burning regime is needed to stop proliferation of shrubs.

Aboriginal people burnt these swamps almost annually, which cleared them of shrubs; and shrubs lower the water table. Burning also reduced rubbish, so helping to maintain clean water and eliminate mosquitoes, other biting insects, and leeches. There is evidence that Aboriginal people used this swamp as part of a trading route from Prospect and beyond to Palm Beach. Local people speak of their grandparents seeing Aboriginal people passing along this route; this must have been around the middle of the nineteenth century.

Return to Quarry Road gate

Retrace your path to Pogson Trig and then turn left along Tunks Ridge Fire Trail to your original starting point at the Quarry Road gate.

Walkers will note from the map that the fire trail extends beyond the sandstone swamp towards Berowra Creek and Fishponds. However, there is no formally constructed track down from the end of the fire trail to Fishponds because the area is a habitat for sensitive and threatened plants. The Park managers also do not encourage regular use of this undefined section because the terrain is steep and has an unstable surface.

Keep an eye out for other interesting residents



Black-faced Quokoo Shrike *



Native Iris CR



Copper-tailed Skink *



Another of the noisy locals - cicadas like this Black Prince *



Noisy Friarbird *

Illustrations Courtesy: (*) DEC and (CR) Carol Pbach



Gregor Newton

Juncus usitatus another of the moisture loving rushes seen frequently in the Park



Jeremy Steele

Grinding grooves, evidence of use by indigenous people



Jeremy Steele

Juvenile leaves of *Eucalyptus camfieldii* a threatened species



Foss Doig

Hakea propinqua has large warty fruit and needle-like leaves.

Rare examples of Australian bridge engineering preserved in the Park

McDonald Timber Truss Bridge

The McDonald Timber Truss Bridges which crossed Berowra and Tunks Creeks were based on a design by the Italian Andrea Palladio (1508-1580). This design was later modified by the NSW Dept. of Public Works (PWD), Chief Engineer William C. Bennett in 1859, to utilise the strengths of local timbers like ironbarks.



Jeremy Steele

This design was known as the "Old PWD Truss". The design was expensive to maintain and had some structural faults. Only two of these bridges remain in NSW.

In 1884 John McDonald, the then PWD Bridge Engineer, produced a new design to overcome these problems and cater for increased loads. McDonald pioneered new technology using composite construction with timber and steel members used to the best structural advantage. His design became known as the McDonald Timber Truss.

Only five of these bridges now survive in NSW and all are of State Heritage significance. Only the bridge over Tunks Creek now survives out of the pair originally built in Galston Gorge in 1891.¹

Today's bushwalkers have the pleasure of knowing, as they cross the remaining bridge when walking in the Berowra Valley Regional Park, that they are crossing examples of military and engineering history.

1. Based on an article by Don Fraser of the Engineering Heritage Committee, Engineers Australia, Sydney

Steele Military Bridge

The Steele Military Bridge across Berowra Creek on the Quarry Rd fire trail replaced an earlier log bridge. It was installed in 1964-65 to provide access from Hornsby to Dural, for fire-fighting vehicles. The replacement bridge came from the Forestry Commission at Coffs Harbour through the auspices of the Outer Sydney Bush Fire Prevention Association which funded the construction by Hornsby Shire Council

The Steele Bridge is a Warren Truss type through bridge design using galvanised mild steel pipe. After using it extensively and successfully in the South West Pacific campaign, the Australian Army sold off its stocks of Steele Bridges in about 1950. It is now rare to find an intact example of the Steele Bridge. The School of Military Engineering History Section believes that only three or four bridges are still in use in NSW today.¹



George Foster

This bridge was previously known as the Bailey Bridge. It was thought to be a 1910 Sir Donald Bailey design used by the British Army in the Second World War. It is not a Bailey Bridge but an Australian bridge designed and produced in 1942.

As the Australian 6th and 7th Divisions and most of the 1st Corps troops were returning from the Middle East to South East Asia, on the SS Orcades, to face the rapidly advancing Japanese, the Corps' Chief Engineer Brigadier Steele realised Australian forces urgently needed heavy engineering equipment unavailable from Britain.

Brigadier Steele, later Major-General Sir Clive Selwyn Steele KBE DSO MC VD, the first Engineer-in-Chief ever appointed in the Australian Army, served in both World Wars. Between the Wars he built up a successful engineering consulting business.

He instructed Captains G T Colbach and R A Simpson, to design a heavy bridge to be fabricated in Australia. The design was completed in transit. A prototype was made by Hume Steel Limited by April 1942, tested and put into production.

1. This article was based on information provided by the School of Military Engineering History Section and Hornsby Shire Council.