

Mackay Highlands Great Walk



From Rainforest to Savannah 25th August to 1st September 2021

We loved this Walk so much we did it once, twice, three times.....

Well, only bits of it. Part of the track we did once. Part we did twice, and part, because of necessity; we did three times (although to be fair we could have skipped the triple trek as we did get an offer of a lift back to the car on the last day).

Having spent a few days at the Broken River Mountain Resort in August and walking two short 8-kilometre sections of the track around Broken River (the entire track is 56 kilometers long), we made the rash, and almost rushed, decision to do the entire length of the Mackay Highlands Great Walk.



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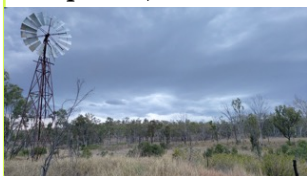


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Having done the Tasmanian Trail in Feb to April earlier in the year I 'kind of' liked the idea of completing a long official walk. There is only one issue with this walk. Transport. It isn't easy to get to, or away from, unless you have two vehicles!

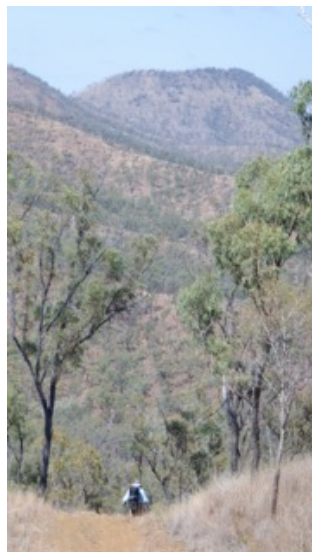
Being transient we need to hire a car to explore any locality we stop at, and that becomes expensive enough, but when the official end point is a campsite that is only accessed by 4wd, well, how deep are your pockets (and are you 4wd competent)?



Unfortunately the information readily available for this walk is scant. The government parks website doesn't have a lot of information (and prior to my email to the government, is out of date: comments that the local store can provide basic provisions were wrong as the local store had closed). On information boards there is note that you need to organise someone to pick you up at Moonlight Dam camp area, which is the official end of the walk. But the camp site is 4wd access only! The 'Discovery Guide; brochure of the Mackay Highlands and Eungella National Park mentions that the historic township of Mount Britton is 5.5km walk away from the Moonlight Dam campground. What it doesn't mention is that Mount Britton is also a campsite AND it is 2wd accessible, making it a lot cheaper to hire a suitable car to sit at the end of the walk for several days... We were informed of this by two other campers – when we got to Moonlight Dam! We met two groups who had left a car at Mount Britton. And one of those groups had track notes. Track Notes?!! Where did they get those?

Apparently there are some notes in a book of bushwalks by the government parks department, but even these more organised walkers admitted they struggled to find info. They also commented they would be using AllTrails. We had used AllTrails as a reference but the track has changed in some places and it was more prudent to follow official track markers than the AllTrails red line, whether they were official orange triangles, or bits of pink or orange plastic tape. The other frustration is that you can't just go and buy topographic maps anymore. You can download and print them but because we had left our organization so late we could only get them printed to A3. Too small to be readily practical but we had them as an emergency if we needed them.

So how did we cope doing a one-way walk with no one, or no vehicle to pick us up? We doubled our distance and made it a 'there-and-



back' walk instead. Doubling our time on track, and more than doubling our energy, as the steep descent on day three became a more than 'slightly' energetic slog back up hill on day five. Our start and finish point was the Broken River Mountain Resort where we could easily organise ourselves for the night before, and could enjoy a hot shower and a meal cooked by someone else when we finished. The resort isn't at the start of the Great Walk, it is around 11 kilometres down the road, but we had previously covered 8km of the first section when we stayed at the resort earlier in August, and the very first couple of kilometres we did as a return walk/loop on the day we arrived at the Resort on this trip.



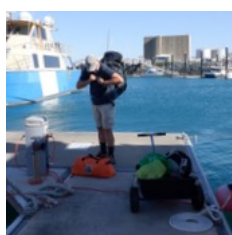
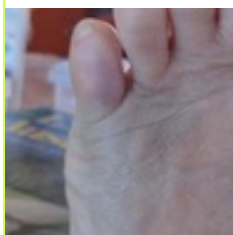
Because it was a rushed decision our food consumption wasn't ideal. Lunches were essentially as we had on the Tasmanian Trail; Clif bars, scroggin and a third protein/energy bar. Dinners were freeze dried food but as we had no time to order decent food we had to revert to the stuff we had got as an emergency backup for Tassie if my US order of Wild Zora hadn't come through. Wild Zora did arrive in time for that trip so we had a heap of Back Country waiting for the right moment. And this was it. Breakfasts on the other hand were a bit of a rush. Commercial freeze dried breakfasts that we had easy access to were not ideal. We didn't have time to order any in so in the end we packed a cup of Brookfarm Gluten Free muesli for each breakfast and we ate it dry. This gave us 450 calories per serve.

Because we weren't expecting a full gamut of weather some of the items we had carried for Tassie got left behind. Andrew left his thermals, down jacket, wet weather pants, and fleecy beanie behind. I left behind my down jacket and fleecy cap but I did keep the thermals in the pack. We managed through one freezing and several cold nights, and several hot days! It was a trip of extremes: cold nights, hot days, sunshine and over one night, lots (and lots) of rain (which led to lots of mud!).

As impromptu excursions go, this was a doozy. We weren't track fit, although we weren't as bad as we'd been before our morning walk up Mount Larcom on the 3rd June. And we weren't pack fit – we hadn't had a reasonably loaded pack on our backs since we walked into Dover, Tasmania on the last day of the Tasmanian Trail trek on 4th April. We were however a lot fitter by the time we finished!

The official recommendation, is that you walk this track north to south to *'allow you to follow track markers and avoid extremely steep climbs in dry and exposed conditions'*. If we had only been traversing this trail that way, I would have concurred. Having done it in reverse as well, I still concur.

In principle I adopted the same photographic schedule that I had in Tasmania; one photo every hour - or thereabouts, with a few extras thrown in. Sometimes this worked, sometimes it didn't (I had to remember to check the time – I didn't have an alarm on) and on the second last day, having forgotten to charge my camera I ran out of power so the final few photos of day six are from the phone – and not on the hour. I am glad I took vague notes of the trip because writing this up I discovered the time setting on my camera is one hour out – really confusing for trying to marry up images and text. I also started the trek by taking a daily photo of my injured left little toe. I think I was hoping to get a history of its recovery (bruising) but after a few days I gave up. Unless I hit it, it didn't hurt and I had other foot issues to deal with.



Day 0

25th August 2021

Mackay to Broken River Mountain Resort: Getting to the start:

At 1425 we stepped out of the light at the car park at the Sky Window lookout on the Eungella Dam Road, and into the rainforest on the Cedar Grove Track, heading north toward Eungella township, to circle through the Pine Grove Circuit and return to the car. This is the first little section of the Mackay Highlands Great Walk and I wanted to tick it off before we started the harder portion of the trek tomorrow, as I suspected we wouldn't be in the mood to complete this little jaunt after a week of backpacking. I had assumed as we were starting at the Sky Window lookout area, which gives one the impression from the road of being on the way downhill from Eungella to the Broken River, that we would be walking a slight uphill, so on the way back from Eungella town it would be downhill. It turned out to be the opposite of this.

Because it was a late start, and a late finish two hours later, there wasn't a lot of birdlife around, some species being quite obvious; brush turkey, brown cuckoo dove, thornbill,. Others needed stalking; eastern whip bird, and pitta (heard only). The wompoo pigeon was also heard but not seen. Animals spotted consisted of one small 'macropod', some fruit bats and a mid-sized monitor

This little stroll covered a few points...a) today's exercise, b) a test for my foot, having cracked my little toe last night (and I was glad to see the bruise hadn't expanded exponentially), and c) covering the northern first few kilometres of the Mackay Highlands Great Walk.

To get here we had left the marina around 0915 this morning, headed to Canelands Shopping Centre where I got a massage, backtracked to an area by the Pioneer River where a small locally grown, organic or pesticide free



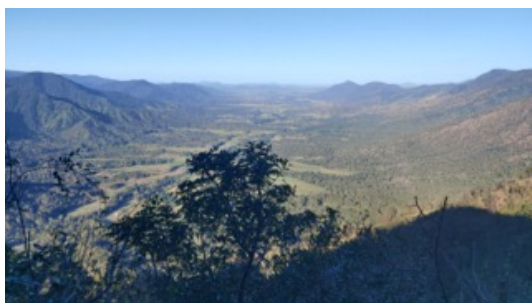
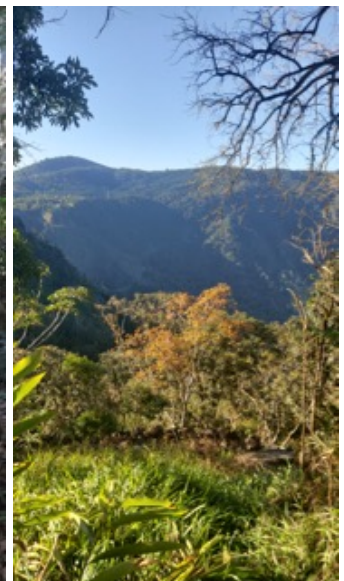
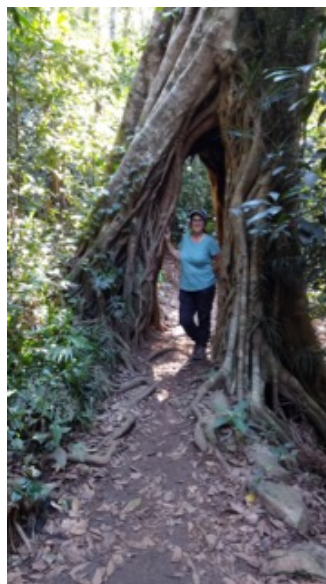
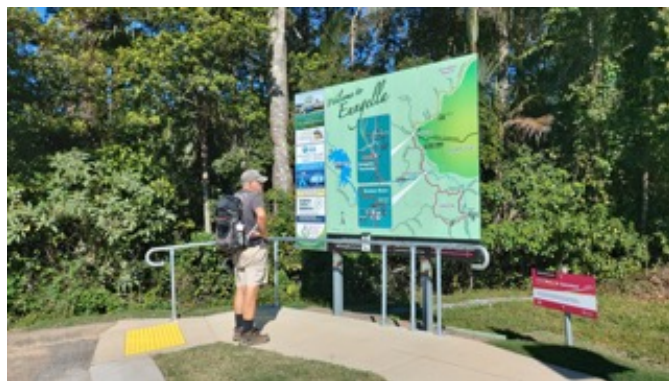
market was underway (where we bought some strawberries for desert) before heading out of town.

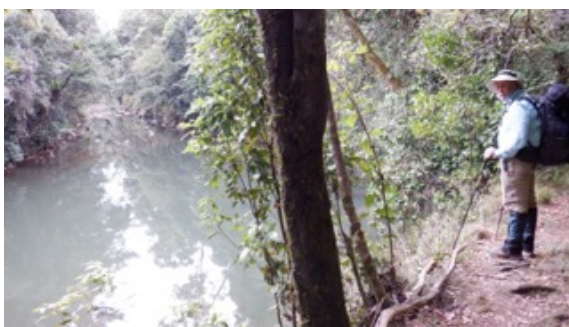
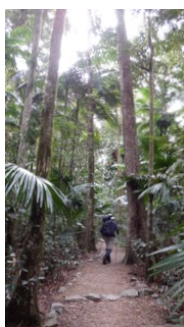
After dropping off two books at the book swap at the info centre at Dame Nellie Melba's house, and picking up some yoghurt at woollies in Marian, we ended up with a burger for lunch at the Finch Hatton general store.

We logged into our accommodation around 1400 before heading back uphill for the walk.

For dinner we were back at the Resort. The restaurant isn't open for sit-in guests at the moment but they do a takeaway service so we got a decent cooked meal. Andrew had chicken parmigiana, I had lamb shank.

We booked a smaller room for our stay this time. We didn't need 'room for a holiday', we just needed a bed, and whilst perfectly adequate for what it was, \$30 more gets you a separate bedroom, a four seater table rather than two chairs under a bench by the side wall (a la motel room), a bigger kitchen area and fridge, a reverse cycle heater and a wood fire instead of just a panel radiator, and a toilet you can close the door of without having to sidle up by the bowl. We didn't change our booking for our return, after all we just needed a bed then too, but if we went back, we would book into the bigger room.





Day 1
26th August 2021

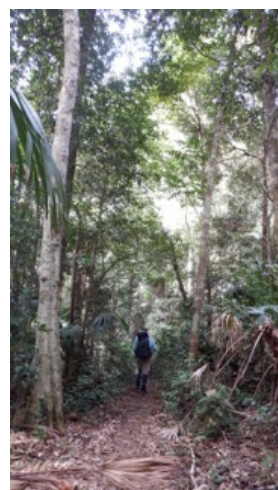
Broken River Mountain Resort to Crediton Hall

I got up with a slight trepidation this morning. How would I cope? I wasn't really track fit but we had least done some walking. But I wasn't pack fit and although I wasn't too worried about today, it was a short 11.5 kilometers by comparison to tomorrow's 19.5, and we knew the first 8km was relatively flat as we'd done it before, I wondered how I would cope for the next couple of days. Having slipped down one of the helm stairs two nights ago and cracked my little toe, again (this is the third time I think), I had a swollen, sore and bruised foot. How long would I last hobbling on it?

The morning wasn't too chilly and after a final check of the contents of our backpacks, shoving the leftover gear in the car, and saying a fond farewell to the staff at reception, we clicked down the driveway with our walking poles at 0815.

Within five minutes we were looking for platypus at the viewing spot but only stopping for around thirty seconds. We did not see any. By 0830 we were in the rainforest taking the track adjacent the river and we heard our first pittas.

We had our first break at 1005 on a couple of logs that had been cut from a tree, which had fallen across the track. Both of us were feeling pretty reasonable considering the weight on our backs and the length of time we'd been walking. Our second break was at 1100 where the Wishing Well Circuit comes out on the main track. We figured it was cool and sheltered inside the rainforest. In about 300 meters we would be exposed on the road and the scenery wouldn't be anywhere near as nice. There had been a few bird calls (apart from the pitta) on this 8 kilometre traverse, the most obvious of which had been the eastern whipbird, whose calls were on and off during the entire length of this section.



We turned left out of the rainforest onto the road at 1122. The road was at first flanked with rainforest on both sides, the road reserve a play area for many small birds who came out to have a look at the two crazy humans passing by. Grey Fantails were prevalent but the most obvious were yellow robins; they were simply 'everywhere.' As the adjacent scenery turned to farmland other birds were spotted however; kookaburras, a pipit, a great cormorant (a bird we didn't expect to see in a farm paddock with cows) and the best spot of all; a male regent bowerbird as he flew from right to left across the road. Andrew missed seeing this magnificent yellow and black bird as he was looking elsewhere. I had been told that these birds don't arrive in this area until September so he was a bit early – and I was lucky to see him.

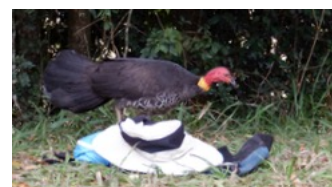
We got to the Crediton Hall Campground at 1205. The tent was up and I'd got my bed ready by 1230. Andrew took a few minutes longer. We had put the tent down on a bottom tier of grass but we borrowed the undercover picnic table near the road for lunch..

The birdlife at the campground was terrific; again yellow robins were prolific but there were also little shrike thrush, welcome swallows, crows, magpies, and mudlarks amongst others.

We used the afternoon to rest in the shade by the tent and we were visited by a brush turkey (who would have nibbled Andrew's toes if I hadn't warned him) a couple of grey fantails, and a mob of scrub wrens who were very cute. And very curious.

Several cars came in to check out the campground. But they all left. The companions we had overnight were two bikers, who came in mid afternoon to check the place out but left to look for firewood and potentially check out the other campground 11 km away. They returned mid afternoon and we popped over for a late afternoon chat with them. N&S were lovely and we had several things in common with them, even if transport wasn't one of them.

We had our dinner around 1630. After chatting to the boys by their campfire we finally headed into bed early, around 1815, just as the sun went down.





Day 2
27th August 2021

Crediton Hall to Denham Range Campground

We didn't depart Crediton Hall Campground particularly early, starting around the same time as yesterday morning, and departing at 0825. It has been a long time since we've had to pack up camp and get ourselves organised for a long walk. N&S obviously didn't mind our company last night as they decided to join us on the roadway for the first part of today's walk and we shared the journey at a reasonable but interrupted pace, stopping for a bit of bird watching as we went. N&S left us after we had gone through the first bit of rainforest, deciding not to cross the small waterway, and as they reversed their steps we continued over the creek, up an old access track and onto the next bit of rainforest.

It was at the start of the next bit of rainforest that we had our first break at 1000. We then plunged into the relative darkness of the rainforest with a bit more energy and continued until our next break around 1100. At 1110 as we were about to get going I discovered a leech on my backpack. This initiated a leech check for both of us but no more of these animals were spotted.

We had our lunch break at 1215. By this time we had left the rainforest and were walking on a formal dirt road lined with eucalypt forest with mid to low undergrowth. Here we discovered a tick on



the outside of Andrew's shirt. So this initiated a tick check. Again, at this time, no further ticks were discovered.

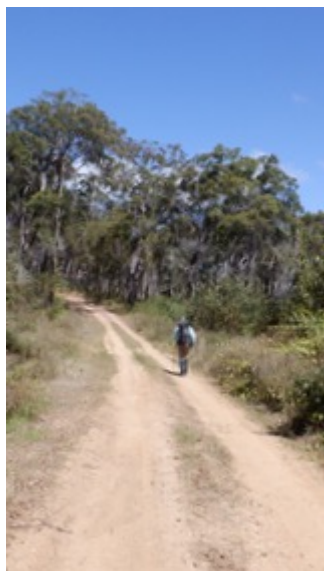
Our next break was at 1330 in eucalypt forest with gorgeous greeny yellow

grass understorey. Unfortunately I have no photo of this spot but managed some photos of this lovely landscape a short time later. It was getting rather hot by this stage so at this break we rolled up our sleeves, and we both took our gaiters off. I also took the bottom part of my trouser legs off so essentially I was now walking in shorts.

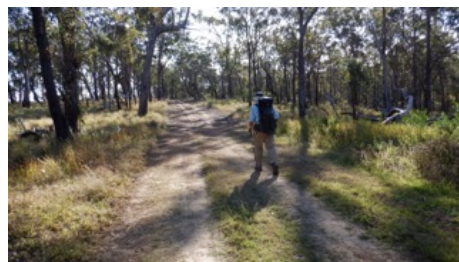


There were two more breaks after this before we got to camp; the first at the top of a long slog uphill where we, according to the AllTrails elevation schematic, discovered we were at the top of the last biggish hill before camp. And the second just a break to catch our breath, and for me to get the heart rate down a bit having a few minutes before disturbed a medium sized steer adjacent the track. For the record, with the pace he took off I think we startled him as much as he startled me. From this last break however, camp wasn't far away.

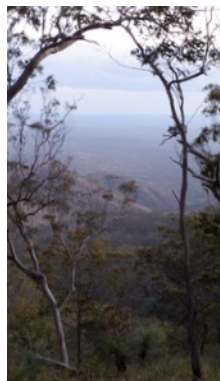
We got into camp around 1600 and spent a few minutes looking around for a flat site.



Unfortunately there wasn't one that was perfect and the only place to put up the tent was in the dirt. We chose a spot that would have had a fabulous view out the door had we been an end-opening tent.



From a birdlife perspective we'd missed the red backed wrens and rufous fantail at Crediton Hall but spotted some before we hit the second patch of rainforest. Birdlife inside the rainforest was hard to spot – and we didn't really have time to dawdle and stalk – we didn't know the terrain of the rest of the day and had no idea how long it would take us. Bird watching was unfortunately not a priority.



The last task of the day, after retiring to the tent, was to extract a tick that was burrowing under the skin on Andrew's back!





Day 3
28th August 2021

Denham Range
Campground to
Moonlight Dam
Campground

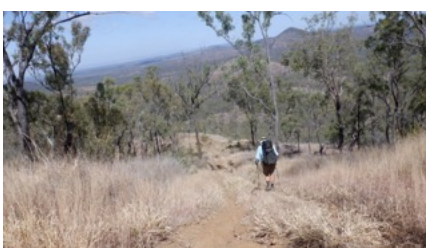
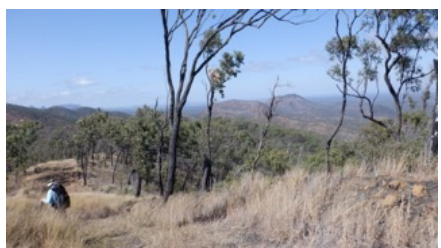
Our departure time almost seems set in stone as we left camp this morning at 0825. We turned left, passed through the closed vehicle gate (open to walkers) just before 0900 and shortly afterward started the steep descent down the range. The steep descent section of today's traverse is less than one third of today's distance but it takes a fair bit of concentration. We had poles to help us. We met others over the next few days who didn't. I had to watch what I



did with my feet, and I was trying to avoid pressing on my left toe, so the wear on my feet was not even.

I had started the day wondering how steep this track was going to be. It is listed as Old Dray Track in the AllTrails app. But is that a name or a description? I had commented to Andrew that it couldn't be that steep as horses don't like overly steep roads pulling loads. Andrew then reminded me that pioneers often used oxen and they traverse much steeper terrain. This comment led me to images of photos I'd seen from Tasmania with stock pulling carts or trams down steep terrain in the Gordon Valley. And then I remembered the Caves Track, part of the Tasmanian Trail. The Caves Track is an old stock route. It was fairly steep. But half of it, underfoot, was rock. We traversed that track (very slowly on a hot day) uphill. Downhill should be easier.





Shouldn't it?

At 1015 we took a break and took off the bottom section of our trousers. Andrew also attended to my right little toe, wrapping it with padded tape to stop the blister developing. We didn't know it at the time but we were almost down the main section of steep terrain. At 1130 we took a rest on some boulders in the shade of a dry creek bed. At 1215 we were at the water tank around halfway between campsites. Here we had lunch. At 1315 we had a short stop and at 1430 we took a longer break on the side of the track, avoiding as many ants as possible. These small insects were running around as if they had a mission; but rain was forecast for tomorrow and ants tend to increase their activity before rain – or so the old wives tales go. For us we were just recovering. The day was getting very hot. And the track was through very open woodland – there wasn't a lot of shade over the road. We were 1.5 kilometres to camp.

At around 1500 we walked into camp; a spot we were familiar with having popped in by vehicle on 19th August on a drive back from Broken River to Mackay. We were alone for a while until a ute came in and set up camp near the gate. B came over for a brief chat before heading back to help his partner set up camp. If we hadn't been so exhausted we may have popped over later to share their campfire.

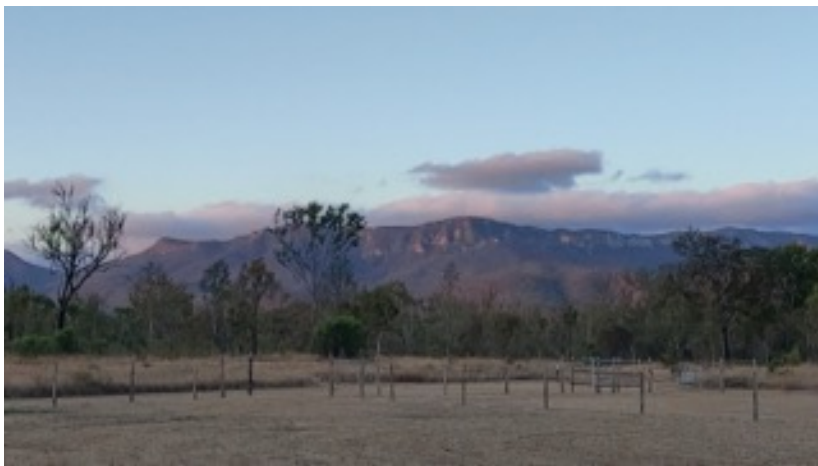
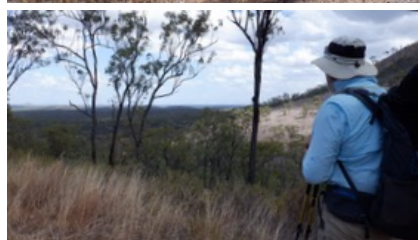
Bird list for today: King parrot, Blue faced honeyeater Magpie, Crow, Fire tails, Flycatcher satin, Noisy friarbird, Sulphur crested cockatoos, Kookaburra

Helmeted friarbird heard in the evening.



Water tank: Half way mark







Day 4
29th August 2021

Moonlight Dam Campground to Mount Britton to Moonlight Dam Campground.

Comparatively speaking we left camp early, walking through the person gate at around 0800. In theory today's walk wasn't far, just 5.5 kilometres to Mount Britton to have a look around, but the blurb on the interps board had suggested walkers need to be relatively experienced as despite the fact the terrain is relatively flat, it is also very exposed with minimal tree cover in harsh conditions.

Weather wise we were expecting rain sometime today but the morning gave no inkling of that eventuality. Skies were blue. The sun was hot. And indeed the track relatively exposed. Knowing we were walking up a vehicle track of some descript and taking the temperature into account I opted not only to leave my gaiters behind, but the bottom of my trousers as well; hence I was essentially walking in shorts. And whilst sun exposure on my legs was a certainty I figured that I hadn't had them exposed to too much UV in the past few days; a few hours probably wouldn't hurt.

The only other factor to think about was snakes. A dirt vehicle track shouldn't pose too many problems if





we kept an eye on the track ahead and were wary of long grass on either side. Andrew made the comment that in theory we should be relatively safe if we were, say, more than 1.5 times the length of the snake away from it. The trick was to not encounter any in the first place.

We arrived at Mount Britton at around 0945, after two short Trish-foot-first-aid stops,. It had indeed been an exposed and hot journey. We noted a couple of interps boards as we entered the main area but our first aim was the concrete (cool) picnic table under a magnificent fig tree. We ended up staying quite a while under this tree as we were joined by K&P, campers who had been here a couple of days.

It was during this time that I found I needed the toilet. The toilet at Mount Britton is a typical outback drop toilet, with one of the modern processing buckets under it. It doesn't, like other similar facilities, have a door on it. Instead it has a fence from one side of the building out from and around to the entrance on the opposite side. The fence doesn't go to the ground. There is about a foot gap to the ground, and the other side of the fence happens to be the dirt road. I toddled off, as you do, entered the 'hut' and sat down. It was then I looked in front of me. Just on the other side of the fence in front of me was a snake; a rather long snake. And most definitely a poisonous one! His (her) head was up and looking in my direction. The tongue was out and flicking in my direction. What do I do now?

Having been allowed enough movement to get me into the room I figured, if I was very slow, I could pick up the spare roll of toilet paper on the ground and potentially use it as a distraction if I needed to throw it. I didn't have my trouser legs on. I didn't have my gaiters on. My legs were totally exposed and given the length of the snake I was well within the 1.5 times the range of its length. I know I have a loud voice but the fig tree was a fair way away – neither Andrew nor the others would have heard me.

So we stared it out. I must have won as eventually the snake decided to move on a bit, temporarily giving me more of a



fright by turning his head further round my way but then heading off down the slope. As soon as his head, and therefore his eyesight, was behind the concrete stump at the base of the fence I moved. He heard me and moved in the direction he was going a bit faster, in fact so incredibly fast that I wouldn't have won any contested battle.

The snake ended up resorting to the shade below the toilet. I ended up resorting to the shade under the fig tree.

Eventually K & P went on their way and we walked around the Mount Britton site to read some of the interps boards (there is very little left of this 1830'-60's gold mining settlement). After this we thought we might try The Bluff. The Bluff is listed in the All Trails app as a there-and-back walk-come-scramble to a rocky tor at the back of Mount Britton. The roads at Mount Britton didn't seem to work with the red track on the All Trails app – the one road going vaguely in the right direction had 'no unauthorised access' signs. The actual red track on the app did leave the road at a flattened, clearly foot trafficked spot but after a few meters I lost that to animal tracks and having nothing on the bottom half of my legs I didn't wish to be rushing through overgrown scrub. It was also near the middle of the day, hot, and we had 5.5 kilometers to walk back to camp. We thought the prudent state of affairs was to not attempt this goat track today, have lunch and wander back to camp. If we were feeling brave later, this location was accessible by 2wd – we could come back.

So, we had lunch at the Town Lookout (which I thought might give a lookout to the local rock formations (which it did to a small degree) but actually gives a view back over where the town was) and then headed back down the hill to the picnic table under the fig tree. It was cool down there and we decided we could either walk back to camp in the heat or wait in the cool and walk back later. Just as we got to the table B & F from our camp cycled in. So we spent an hour or so chatting to them before they headed back, cycling the long way around, and we headed back walking the way we had come. They beat us to camp.

We were back at camp around 1500 and spent some time, amongst the ants on the ground in the shade, recuperating. It was hot. It was also muggy. And having about one bar of reception we could see that the forecast rain was on its way. This spurred us in to an early dinner and early into the tent for bed.

Birds noted for the day: Mudlark, Pale headed rosella, Peaceful dove, Blue faced honeyeater, Rainbow lorikeet, Kookabutra, Crow, Whistling kite, Pied butcherbird, Pied currawong, Whitecheeked honeyeater, ? Honeyeater, Firetails, Sulphur crested cockatoo, ? Pigeon (heard), Superb fruit dove (heard), Helmeted friar bird (heard)





Day 5: Back up the Hill!
30th August 2021

Moonlight Dam Campground to Denham Range Campground

Nebo's expected top temperature today was 30 degrees Celsius. Eungella's top temperature expectation for today was 24 degrees Celsius. We were closer to Nebo where we started. We were going to be closer to Eungella where we finished. And it was all going to be up!

Well, not quite. The 'really' up part was only four or five kilometres but that was UP in capital letters. So that we weren't starting the heart pumping over exertion in the middle of the day we planned to leave camp early.

Leaving at 'the crack of dawn' was not quite correct, but it was close. The alarm was on for 0500. We finally left camp at 0615, the sun hadn't quite come over the tops of the cliff escarpment to our east, and Andrew hadn't had his coffee!

I had originally woken up at 0311 and the tent had been quite dry; when we went to pack it up around two hours later it was wet with condensation.

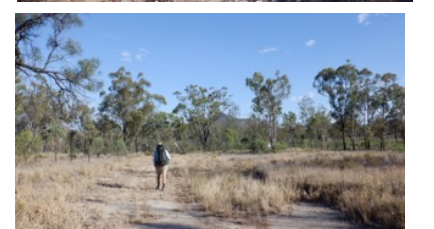
We took a break around 0700 in the morning sun, and then a break around 0800 (after making really good time) at the water tank halfway along today's track. We had a decent break here and had our breakfast, and left the tank at 0840. We started up the foothills of the 'steep bit' at 0945.

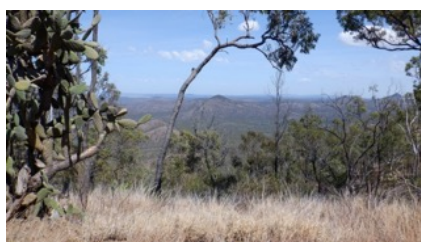


It was a slow trip up and we took twice as long going UP than we did coming DOWN two days ago. Our steps were short; I was travelling in 20 step tranches before getting by breath back, and our stops were longer than normal. Our 1030 stop was at the same place we'd stopped at at 1030 on the traverse down two days ago. There was a stop at 1100 on the middle of the track and no photo was



0700 break. We are still smiling!





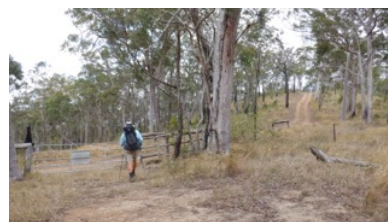
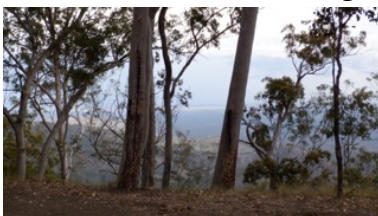
taken as we were too busy getting some energy and Hydralite into our system and to cool down. It was very hot and being stressful, hyperthermia was something we needed to avoid. We had a short break for lunch around 1200 and then another break at 1300.

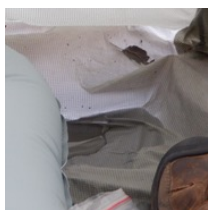
Because the conditions and the task were sapping an incredible amount of energy from us we had no energy left to converse. So we communicated with three numbers. 1. Stop. 2. Hot. 3. Nice Breeze!

At 1315 we turned out of the UP track onto the road toward the campground. My first reaction, and elated whoop, was followed by a low groan. The next bit of road was up. I wasn't expecting undulating hills. I couldn't remember them from two days ago. We were tired. We were walking slower. We got to camp at 1400.

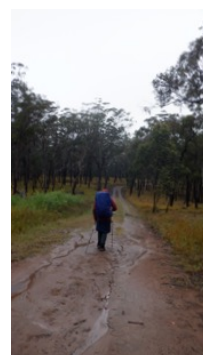
We heard the first thunder rumble at 1500 and watched the clouds and rain go down the valley. The rain radar was not clear on which direction the storm was travelling. Nebo's forecast was for 30 degrees with rain starting at 1600. Eungella's forecast was for 24 degrees with rain starting at 1300. Clouds were coming in from both directions but so fast that patches of blue and sunshine sailed over us in quick succession before the white closed in again. It was windy but not as windy as it had been two days ago

At just after 1500 we didn't know if we were going to get wet or not, or when, or where from, so we organised a very early dinner and went to bed at 1641. Thunder rumbles were sporadic for the next few hours but only a very light drizzle was falling when I got up for my 'midnight' run. A few nights ago we had spotted a bright light on the horizon when it got dark. This was a very large piece of mining equipment. Tonight however the entire horizon was lit up like a city with many pieces of mining equipment. We are overlooking the Bowen Basin after all!





Day 6
31st August 2021



Denham Range Campground to Crediton Hall

We awoke to rain. But we weren't expecting anything else. The wind direction and rain had unfortunately changed overnight so the guy lines that had been set up the evening before weren't doing anything, and the pressure from outside now had the foot end of the tent bowing in and distorting the usual bulbous shape of the tent. This meant the fly was touching the tent in spots that it wasn't supposed to, and there was more water inside the tent than we expected.

Once we were awake this morning we checked the rain radar; fortunately this location has a tiny bit of internet reception. The rain radar showed rain to the north and south of us. But the area around us was clear, or clearing up. As we know that the radar is not perfect in this general area we wondered if we could trust it. Eventually Andrew got up and stuck his head outside. The wind seemed to have eased and the drops heard were from the trees.

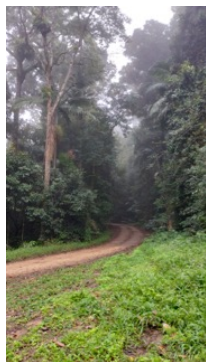
Should we get up and make a go for it? Or stay until rain was predicted to ease and then only get to the water tank with a longer day tomorrow? Or should we stay inside the tent in the relative dry and delay our return by a day?

There was no dignified way of packing up the tent. It was wet, and the base of the tent, fly and the entire ground sheet was muddy. And as it was a late start and there was nowhere dry to sit anyway, breakfast was had standing up, Andrew didn't get his coffee for the second morning in a row, and we headed out of camp, slightly chilly and damp, as soon as was practicable. It was about 0900.

Despite the less than enthusiastic conditions, (a grey day is never as enticing as a sunny one), we made good time and at least there was no heat to sap our energy and slow us down. The first wildlife we noted, apart from the birds, was a mob of cattle, and as we disturbed them they went thundering away. I assumed they would head into the bush but the



churned up muddy surface of the track proved otherwise with Andrew commenting they were obviously racing cattle.. they had taken the inside line! We didn't count the number of head but they



were protected in the rear by one very large bull. My assumption had come from my glimpse of his rather rotund derrière. Andrew had seen the entire animal and described him as a 'massive Brahman', much larger than the steer (?)/younger animal (different breed) that we had seen on this stretch a few days ago. He was also a vocal Brahman and grunts and bellows were not far away for several kilometres. Whilst these noises may have indicated something a bit more passionate I didn't want to dawdle, you can only appear so wide with outstretched walking poles if it comes to a confrontation. The escaped rogue pig in Tasmania (out of Geeveston) that had chased me was enough of a heart stopper and that animal was significantly smaller than this bull. I wanted out of his territory as quickly as possible. And speaking of pigs, there was also a group of at least three feral pigs that crossed the road in front of us during the time we were in bovine territory, but we managed to scare them away from the road with a series of loud grunts.

We took our first real break (pack off) around 1.5 hours after we had started. We were both feeling reasonable, and we could still hear the bull bellowing nearby, so it wasn't a long break. We managed to stop for the 'lunch break' at the same place we had stopped on the way south, a fallen log partway across the road that was large enough to lean on and strong enough to sit on.

Not long after this we came to the water tank. Only 8.5 kilometers to go!

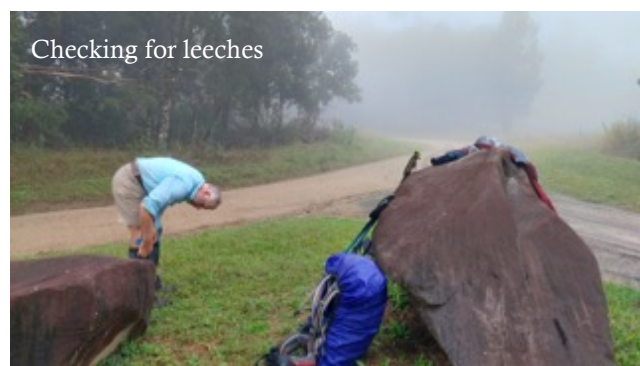
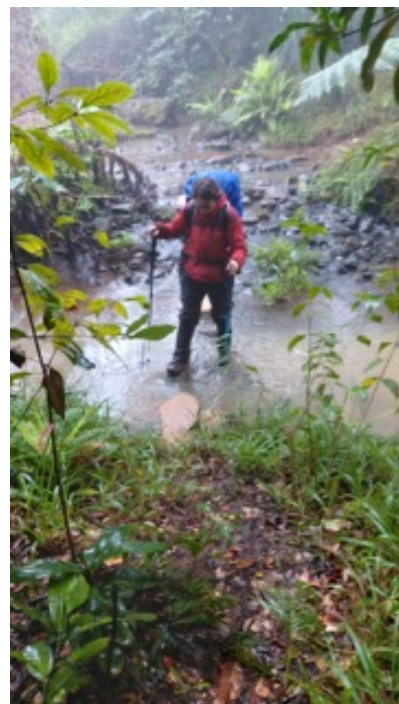




The entrance track in to the rainforest from the water tank is up, and naturally the pace was a bit slower. But I don't mind slowing down in rainforest. Time seems less important. And it was all rather eerie and mystical as we were now walking in cloud.

With the stones, rocks and slippery uneven ground you cant go fast anyway.

Because of the weather and the state of our tent Andrew had suggested that when we got to Crediton Hall that we set the tent up next to the wooden table so we could sort our stuff out and store the packs overnight under the table's shelter. However we turned up at camp to find someone else had beaten us to it. It must have ben a great idea. T & R had also had a wet night, also had Big Agness tents, and were also trying to dry them out using the table as storage and sorting area. The other table in the campground is also covered but was wet and has a bigger patch of swallow poop from its resident nest. We set up our tent adjacent the other wet metal table but commandeered a patch of the wooden table, and the company of T & R, over dinner. We went to bed as it got dark taking only those items that were necessary into the slightly damp and wet tent.



Checking for leeches





Day 7

1st September 2021

Crediton Hall to Broken River Mountain Resort.

I awoke at 0512 to a bird chirping I didn't recognise. And the constant rhythmic and monotonous murmurs of frogs. At 0545 I heard a local rooster call. At 0548 the first of the kookaburras made its presence known. By 0557 the swallow in the nest behind us and at least one pitta had joined the chorus along with a crow, a flycatcher, magpie and lots of other birds. By 0615 we also heard the calls of eastern whipbirds and a wompoo pigeon

Last night the early evening call had been bush thicknee (crurlew) whereas at Moonlight Dam it was mopokes that pierced the nights' silence with a regular calls

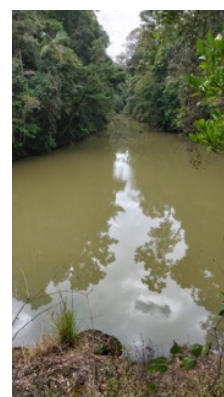
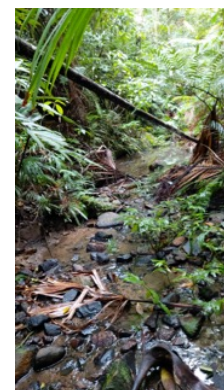
I had survived the night remarkably well considering I had no extra clothes in the tent to layer up, and knowing that last time we were camped here, 6 days ago, you could see your breath in the evening air. Admittedly we were further away from the river this time, and at the time of the 'midnight run' to the toilet at around 2030 I couldn't see my breath so perhaps this night was warmer.

It wasn't all celebration though, with the camp shoes on, which are my water shoes, my feet got a bit cold and wet with the water squelching in.

By 0615 it was light enough to see droplets of water on the tent. Given the state of the tent yesterday I wondered was the water outside? Or inside?

I found I had a headache, which I suspect was the combination of poor pillow inflation, and dehydration, because I knew I hadn't drunk enough for the past two days. But apart from taking some paracetamol or ibuprofen there wasn't much I could do about it where we were.

We got up in reasonable time and changed into our spare, cleaner clothes. Although we still had 11.5 kilometres to walk today we both felt better walking back into civilisation in cleaner clothes; the attire we had been wearing for the past week could probably stand up by itself.



The fellow campers left for their 19.5 km trek at 0750 and we continued packing up, waiting as long as possible to pack up the fly and tent to give them an opportunity to dry off a bit.

I had briefly considered sleeping in this morning as we didn't have far to go, and it was along a terrain we were familiar with. There was no opportunity to do so however, even if we had wanted to as at 0700 workers turned up to continue work on the Crediton Hall. We ended up gossiping with one of them who explained why there was now only one building on site and not two as the interps board indicated. The old school had been left too long and was officially condemned although technically according to this individual, may still have been saved if money had come through from grants early enough.

Explaining that we were walking back to our car and the there-and-back journey we had taken, the contractor was kind enough to offer a lift. If it had been raining Andrew would have said 'yes'. But it wasn't. So at 0910 we left the campground and headed toward base and a hot shower.

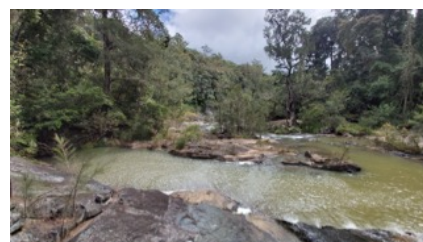
Our progress was good and we had definitely gained fitness over the past few days. Apart from a very brief stop at the bridge before heading into the rainforest on the Crediton Range Track (where we chatted to a fellow walker, removed a leech from her leg and admired the photo of the fabulous carpet snake she'd seen on the track 30 minutes before), we didn't stop for 3 hours., settling down around 1210 for a nibble break at the falls at the river where Andrew had discovered his leech two weeks before.



We got to the Platypus Café by Broken River at the river at National Park at 1300. I was lucky I checked when they



Pulling the car keys out to dump our packs and finally take it easy!



were closing (as Andrew's preference was to check in to accommodation, have a shower and then go for lunch) because we were told the kitchen closed at 1400. Therefore we had lunch first, and finally logged into our accommodation around 1400. The showers were warm and very much appreciated. We spent the afternoon in tub chairs in the resort lounge. Dinner was in the opened up restaurant (three tables) where the local possum was fed scrap fruit from the day's conference (The restaurant is called the Possums Table after all) and we chatted to the proprietors. Apparently they used to offer a pickup service for the walk. And they know someone who might have done it. Now they tell us! We finished the evening, and therefore our Great Walk sojourn, watching mind-numbing television!