

## 7.4 Clerestory Spurs No. 1 and No. 2

### MAPS, ETC.

Department of Lands topographic map, Lithgow; 8931-3S, 1:25000, second edition. Department of Lands topographic map, Cullen Bullen; 8931-3N, 1:25000, second edition. GPS setting WGS 84.

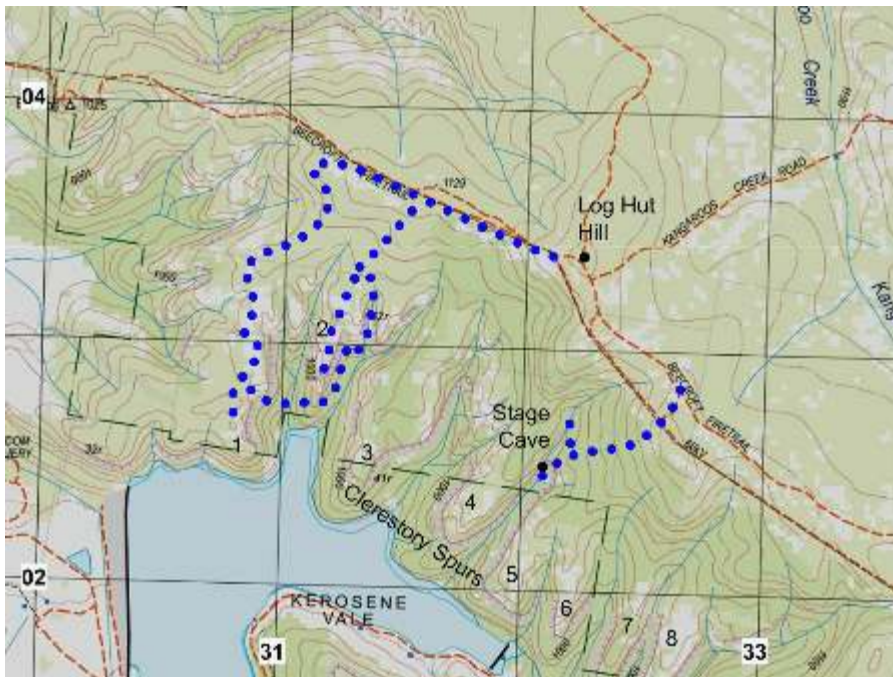
### WALK DESCRIPTION AND ROUTE

Park vehicles at the junction of the Beecroft Firetrail and Kangaroos Creek Road. Head south west through the State Forest and descend into the rainforest at approximately GR 314 030, then make our way around some minor

spurs towards the nose of Clerestory Spur No. 2, GR 310 027. Continue walking below the cliffs, but seek options to ascend to the crest of Clerestory Spur No. 1. This spur is quite bulky, and several options look possible. Depending on available time, continue westward, checking out some very dissected country. About 6km, +&-300m several times. The walk may be done in reverse, depending on conditions. Exploratory.

### GEAR ISSUES

Have clothes to change into in the car for afterwards. 2 litres of water. GPS,



Source © Land and Property Management Authority, Panorama Avenue, Bathurst NSW 2795, www.lpma.nsw.gov.au

PLB, appropriate head and footwear, electrolytes, maps, compass, tape (leader).

## COMMENTS

This is complex and tough terrain. It is immediately south of several known and documented Aboriginal art sites. Some use of a tape should be expected. As far as I am aware, this area has not been visited by bushwalkers.

Date walked 15th April 2014.

## THE WEATHER

A cool, cloudy morning with increasing areas of blue sky until mid-afternoon, when total cloud cover returned. Relative humidity was high all day. Temperature ranged from 11 to 14 degrees C.

## BACKGROUND NOTES

The Clerestory Spurs comprise twelve pagoda studded spurs trending approximately north north east from the main creek system of Sawyers Swamp towards the Beecroft Firetrail. Named by Michael Keats on a Bush Club walk, 14th September 2011. No. 1 GR 308 025; No. 2 GR 312 027; No. 3 GR 313 024; No. 4 GR 317 023; No. 5 GR 319 020; No. 6 GR 322 018; No. 7 GR 324 017; No. 8 GR 326 017; No. 9 GR 327 014; No. 10 GR 331 013; No. 11 GR 334 012; No. 12 GR 336 012.

A clerestory is the upper part of the nave of a Gothic church or other sacred building with windows above the aisle roofs. These pagodas measure up in every way to such a title as they include numerous perforations or windows.



Inlet of Sawyers Swamp between Clerestory Spurs No. 1 and No. 2. Photo: Brian Fox

Clerestory Spurs No. 1 and No. 2 are perhaps the most spectacular of the 12 spurs. They exhibit consistent pagoda development along their entire length and feature complex ironstone plates, and in places highly developed ironstone nodulation. The paucity of vegetation gives the individual pagodas clean lines and dramatic presence.

## TRACK NOTES

The vehicles were parked at GR 321 034, at 0838, at a height of 1163m, immediately west of the junction of the Angus Place - Beecroft Firetrails on the service road for the 66kV power line. Initially, we walked the service trail west to reach the high point of the spinal ridge of the first spur where it projects from the Blue Mountains Range. This was at GR 313 038. We set a course



Rectangular fuel can, a relic from a past era. Photo: Brian Fox

south west and soon had to adjust this to south to maintain our position on the crest, GR 311 037.

By 0900, we had our first pagoda encounter. As we progressed along this ridge, the pagodas became almost continuous. There is no adequate indication on the topographic map of the extensive nature of these pagodas. We climbed one at GR 309 034 and were amazed at the quality of pagoda development in several ravines to the north west. A separate excursion needs to be undertaken to explore these ravines.

Almost as a given, we encountered a bike track, which was used by us from time to time. Our progress south was punctuated by numerous stops to take photographs. Many pagodas were climbed and views were captured both to the west and to the east. The early morning autumn sunlight was great to work with, really enhancing the outlines of the successive ranks of pagodas and, in many places, the profiles of native Cypress Trees, *Callitris* sp.

In a state of near pagoda delirium, we progressed out towards the southernmost high point of Spur No. 1, GR 308 027. Here, we decided that morning tea would be a good idea, and fifteen delicious minutes were spent looking particularly at the knife edge like Spur No. 2 immediately to the east. After morning tea, we would seek to find a way of descent through the 40m high cliffs, visit the manmade lake that now separates Spurs No. 1 and No. 2, then climb to the top of Spur No. 2.



Ian Starkey, Michael Keats, Brian Fox and Joanna Armstrong, backdropped by Clerestory Spur No. 1. Photo: Marion Davies



Yuri Bolotin and Monica Eckert enjoy morning tea near the end of Clerestory Spur No. 1. Photo: Brian Fox



Joanna Armstrong and Marion Davies at the base of Clerestory Spur No. 2.  
Photo: Brian Fox

A 1040, after being confronted earlier with a 3m dry waterfall option, we found a smaller watercourse with a 1m waterfall that was negotiable with less risk. This was the only challenge in the cliff descent; the rest was easy, with many *Leptospermum* species providing impromptu brakes on the slopes above the waterfall, while fallen logs served as the brakes below. This waterfall also

created a 'vegetation zone boundary' separating the upper very dry pagoda area from the lower slopes and valley floor that were carpeted with Native Violet, *Viola hederacea* intermixed with native grasses.

The valley floor was a little piece of paradise and would have made a very pleasant campsite. It was made even more alluring by the sun that decided



The loft of the Choir Loft Cave. Photo: Brian Fox

temporarily to come out of hiding. Dropping our packs, we walked down to the edge of the manmade lake - an annex lake to the ash settlement dam. The noise of frogs croaking away was amazing. The introduced Bulrushes, *Typha* sp. have grown huge, possibly because of the excess nutrients in the water. Some individual plants exceeded two metres in height.

Leaving this little piece of paradise, we had a decision to make: which way would we walk to find a way up Spur No. 2? Spur No. 2 ends with a huge vertical monolith about 30m high and separated from the main spur itself. We decided to walk up along the base of the cliff line on the east side of the spur

and to keep testing each slot and crevice until we found one that would go; then make the ascent.

This was an amazing journey. We found a dry overhang at GR 313 030, and a little further on, two natural tunnels, 5m and 10m in length, caused by cliff sections slipping off and then collapsing against the main cliff. Spur No. 2 has a bulge in the upper reaches, so we had to circle around it. Finding a way up still eluded us. At 1132, GR 314 031, we came across a long dry overhang over 30m in length with ledge like extensions going even further. There was no evidence of human use. We spent quite a few minutes searching for art, hearths, etc., without finding anything.



Climbing up the eastern side of Clerestory Spur No. 2. Photo: Brian Fox



Clerestory Spur No. 1. Photo: Brian Fox



John Fox checking for signs of Aboriginal habitation. Photo: Chris Sterling

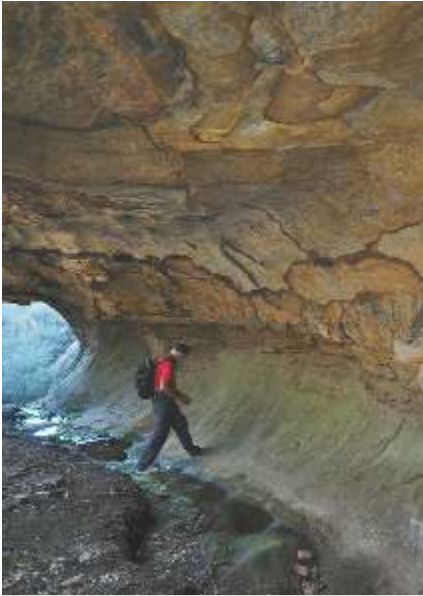




View from the left into the Choir Loft Cave. Photo: Brian Fox



The ash settlement dam (Sawyers Swamp) from atop Clerestory Spur No. 2. Photo: Brian Fox



Michael Keats in this time worn water channel. Photo: Yuri Bolotin



Michael Keats and Joanna Armstrong on one of the many tabulate rocky platforms of Clerestory Spur No. 1. Photo: Brian Fox



Manmade lake within Sawyers Swamp and below Clerestory Spur No. 1. Photo: Brian Fox

Pushing up the valley, we realised it suddenly ended and did not look promising for us to exit. A steep watercourse with a large dead tree wedged in it enabled us to negotiate the first 3 metres of climb. This was followed by a long 45 degree open sandstone slope that really tested leg muscles and one's power of concentration. The climb up the slope was about 50m; the top and level ground was most welcome.

After a quick consultation with the map, we headed south along the ever narrowing ridge of Spur No. 2. We had only travelled a matter of metres when the views of Spur No. 1 were seen and, more excitingly, a series of high pagoda crests that marked a secondary ridge in between Spurs No. 1 and No. 2. This spur, perhaps 300m long, could be easily accessed from the open rock apron like area between the two major spurs, GR 311 032 to GR 311 029. Not

for visiting today. We were keen to get to the end of Spur No. 2.

What a journey it was! For most of its length, this spur is less than 50m wide and in many places less than half that. Also, it is 40m to 50m high relative to the ground. The views are stunning all the way from both west and east aspects. Pagoda walking is an intuitive art and, provided one reads the terrain, it is relatively easy to walk the ironstone ledges, negotiate the small gaps and use the natural hand and footholds.

We stopped at GR 311 031 to examine a rare phenomenon: clusters of ironstone nodules, about billiard ball size, seemingly randomly glued together and with interstitial perforations creating sculptures that were out of this world. Time to move on and out to the very last conjoined pagoda on this spur. We knew from observations when crossing the valley floor that the terminal pagoda



Ringtail Possum. Photo: Chris Sterling



View towards Clerestory Spur No. 2 from No. 1. Photo: Brian Fox



A rare cleared spot seen while descending the eastern side of Clerestory Spur No. 1. Photo: Brian Fox

was separated from the ridge. It is also about 20m lower than the rest of the ridge.

At 1229, on the very end of the spur, we each managed to find a spot to sit to have lunch, GR 311 028. It is a rare place, and we suspect that few others have ever been there. Indeed, a few of us were appreciative of the mutual support needed to climb up the last metre to the top. Descending was much easier. Despite the views and the magic of the location, we stuck to our 20 minute lunch break, and at 1250, we were on our way back, still admiring the

wondrous views all around. This is a location to revisit and explore so much more. Leader Brian was determined that rather than explore the mini spur between Spurs No. 1 and No. 2, we should return to the vehicles, then drive east to the point where we could quickly descend into the ravine between Spurs No. 4 and No. 5 and visit the Stage Cave.

Keeping a good pace, we reached the vehicles at 1334. A quick drink and notation of the walk statistics; distance 8.18km, total ascents 419m; then we were off once more.

## TABLE OF TIMES, LOCATIONS AND GRID REFERENCES

Time	Location	Grid Ref
0838	Park vehicles	321 034
0851	Leave service road, head south west	313 038
0857	Change direction	311 037
0900	Viewing pagodas to north west	311 032
0905	Bike track heading south west	311 035
0909	Viewing pagodas	309 034
0923	On pagoda ridge	308 032
0933	On pagoda	309 032
0941	Pagodas everywhere	309 030
0956	Pagoda view	308 028
1005	End of Clerestory Spur No. 1 + morning tea, 15 minutes	308 027
1040	Descent off Clerestory Spur No. 1	309 027

Time	Location	Grid Ref
1048	Valley floor between Spurs No. 1 and No. 2	310 027
1055	Edge of lake	310 026
1100	At cliff base Clerestory Spur No. 2	311 027
1113	Exploring cliff base	312 030
1118	Dry overhang	313 030
1124	Two tunnels	314 030
1132	Long overhang	314 031
1145	45 degree slope and climb to top	313 032
1208	Ironstone nodules	311 031
1229	On point of Clerestory Spur No. 2 + lunch, 20 minutes	311 028
1309	Climbing ridge	312 032
1324	Climbing ridge	316 037
1334	At vehicles	321 034

## THE STAGE CAVE

The vehicles were relocated to GR 326 027 on the 66kV power line access track. After a good drink, we set off without packs to walk to the site of the Stage Cave.

This walk was largely on old logging tracks. It was quite amazing to note the steepness of the slopes where great trees had been cut and then hauled uphill for stacking and grading before being transported to a mill. It was only the last 80m or so where we had to push through post logging scrub and then fight great ferns that threatened to engulf and completely disorientate us. A large cave was entered at GR 322 026. It was not the Stage Cave, however it was a cave of considerable interest because of the old but still readable graffiti.

In this cave were the names L Deeley 1923; W Belton 1923, and Robert



Earlier visitors have left their mark, 4th October 1929. Photo: Brian Fox

Anderson, 1/1/1936. Very faintly was also, D Nolan 1924. Research by Brian Fox found that the above names were



Ian Starkey, Joanna Armstrong and Michael Keats within the Stage Cave, Photo: Brian Fox

local Lithgow men, Leslie Roy Deeley, Francis William James Belton, Robert Anderson and David Nolan. No artefacts were seen.

Another cave was examined at GR 322 027. This one had the name and date, T. Weinert 1906. Weinert owned land at Wolgan Gap. Research by Brian Fox shows there was a Thomas Weinert, who died in Wallerawang 26th July 1944, aged 80. He would have been 42 in 1906, a good fit for the evidence, although we have no other corroborating proof. It was noted that on the Parish map there were other members of the Weinert family, who owned land at Lidsdale, which is 3km from the cave.

The Stage Cave was entered at 1427, GR 321 025. It is a beautifully proportioned cave, 12m wide, 12m deep and 10m high. The proscenium is perfectly centred. It has all the attributes of a

stage. Taking a close look around, we found some partly buried old rusting food cans and a shard of glass from a bottle. Also a cut log with minor small axe marks is still in the cave together with other cut timber. These caves are all located on Surveyed Portion 405, Parish of Lidsdale.

We returned to the vehicles at 1452. Total distance walked 3.32km, total ascents 89m.

### TABLE OF TIMES, LOCATIONS AND GRID REFERENCES

Time	Location	Grid Ref
1345	Park vehicles	326 027
1358	Graffiti, cave Number 1	322 026
1410	Graffiti, cave Number 2	322 027
1427	The Stage Cave	321 025
1446	Intersect old track	323 026
1452	Return to vehicles	326 027



Tree huggers, John Fox and Michael Keats. Photo: Yuri Bolotin



Chris Sterling, followed by John Fox, descending one of the many crevices.  
Photo: Yuri Bolotin