

Burgess and Oakland Falls

Location: Start at Winbourne Rd, Hazelbrook. Towards the end of Winbourne Rd just before the asphalt ends is where this walk begins. It is signposted and there is a small parking bay opposite.

Duration: 1.5 hours

Grade: Moderate

Features: waterfalls, creek, overhangs

Trip Notes:

The bee buzzed over the new spring flowers and as last month's burst of golden wattle was fading, the dainty grevilleas and "egg and bacon" flowers replaced the colour in the bush. A few worn foot pads weave through this vegetation but the one to take is the path which goes past a few houses before descending the escarpment. After negotiating some tricky steps we soon found ourselves in a large valley which was filled with green ferns and stands of wattle scattered around the tall trunks of eucalyptus trees. Amazingly large king ferns could be seen across the expanse with gorge-like red brown rock shelves behind.

The path winds its way through this picturesque lowland and we spotted a little track on the left leading to a refreshing spot beside the creek. Here the water cascades along the rock bed and the sounds of the bush resonate - the running water and the gentle breeze, the numerous bird calls emphasised by a couple of talkative rosellas nearby. As we approached the creek crossing, we looked out for signs of the old "Diggers Bridge" but unfortunately we could not find any trace of the structure – a rare photo of it can be viewed on the State Library of NSW website. A couple of stepping stones here took us to the other side of the creek and a signpost pointed us in the right direction.

Just a few meters on, the track forks and the route to take is the right fork – the lower track which is signposted to Burgess Falls. (This is the start of the round trip to the two falls and the return is via the left fork.) This short section of track down to the falls was rather steep and a bit slippery with all the leaf litter, but soon it cleared at a cute little overhang which had an inviting old seat tucked in it. The next overhang just before a junction, has a marble plaque (easy to miss if you're not looking up) dedicated to the memory of Lieutenant Corporal E A Burgess. The falls are named after this soldier who lost his life in 1917 in Belgium during the First World War.

Going right at this junction past a little fireplace takes you to the beautiful Burgess Falls where water cascades down the rock face providing an environment where ferns and moss thrive, their bright green colour contrasting with the orange rocks beside them. It's a lovely spot to picnic on the sandy beach or on the large rock shelf overlooking the falls, or even under the overhangs nearby.

Continuing back along this bottom path, following the creek put us on the lower track to Oakland Falls, which is somewhat overgrown in a few spots. The track is lined with ferns and covered in leaf litter – it's a bit rainforest-like with mossy rocks and some enormous eucalypt trees, their stringy bark forming trains around them. There's an interesting termite mound half covered in moss and a few fallen trees to duck under before entering a large shaded overhang. Oakland Falls is not far away

and it can be viewed from a pleasant sandy clearing. However it's more interesting to walk around the back of the falls and find the old stone fireplace right behind, and explore the overhangs and slanting rock walls. On the left of the falls a little row of rocks are actually the steps that take us back up onto the upper track. At this junction, you can turn right to join up with the Horseshoe Falls walk (detailed in the previous edition of the Blueberry Walkabout). However to finish our trip we turn left here and soon complete the falls loop after passing a gigantic tree, hollowed at the base and big enough for an adult to stand in, the inside surface pitch black from a previous fire. Retracing our steps across the creek, through the fascinating valley and back up the escarpment finished this walk.