

Walk 2.7

# NEWNES NATURAL ARCH

Being able to rock scramble is a distinct advantage when exploring Newnes Natural Arch. PHOTO: PETER YANG

## Walk 2.7

### Newnes Natural Arch

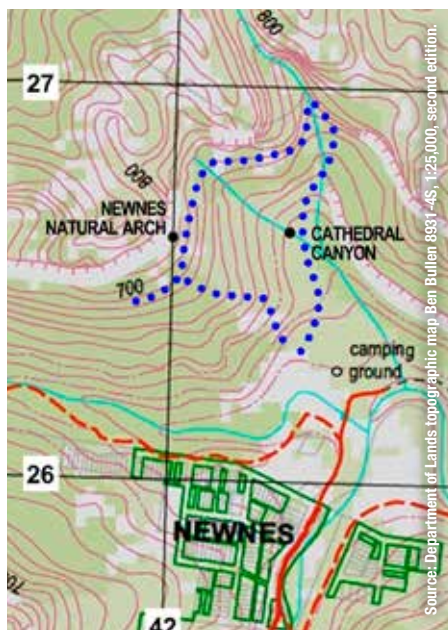
#### The weather

A very grey, totally overcast day, threatening rain from time to time. Temperature range 12 to 15 degrees C.

#### Track notes

The vehicles were parked on the western boundary of the Little Capertee Creek Camping Ground at 0918. A quick briefing session given by Brian followed. In essence, we would climb the talus slope, then look for the spectacular Newnes Natural Arch. Depending on the weather conditions, we would either immediately descend to the vehicles or seek to return via Cathedral Canyon if this was possible.

By 0936, we had made good progress up the talus slope, to GR 4205 2649, 650 m. In sections, our route was



very close to a 45-degree angle; wet dead leaves acted like ball bearings while lichen encrusted rocks were very slippery. Despite this, progress was good, and at 0937 the base of the first

Maps etc.	Department of Lands topographic map Ben Bullen 8931-4S, 1:25,000, second edition. GPS setting WGS84.
Walk description and route	From the old Newnes Hotel drive across Little Capertee Creek, park at the northern end of the Little Capertee Creek Camping Ground, GR 423 263, then ascend the talus slope to the base of the cliff line. Climb up to the Newnes Natural Arch and then explore this unusual rock formation. Leaving the arch, follow the base of the cliffs to intersect with Cathedral Canyon and descend to the vehicles. About 4 km.
Gear issues	First aid kit. Two litres of water. GPS, PLB, appropriate head- and footwear, electrolytes, maps, compass. Have clothes to change into in the car for afterwards.
Comments	Scrambling, exposure. Date walked: 17 June 2016.



Fox brothers (John and Brian) under Newnes Natural Arch. PHOTO: YURI BOLOTIN

or lower cliff line had been reached.

Uncertain as to whether the arch was to the left (west) or right (east) of our position, we headed west as there were a number of rock cairns. Later, these were proved to be rock climbers' markers. Taylor, Pete and Penney, Andrew, in *The Wolgan Guide for rock climbers*, identify seven climbs in the Little Capertee Creek cliffs. All were developed in the 1970s.

Moving west under the cliffs, we encountered a large dry overhang with a well-established colony of Antlions<sup>30</sup>.

Less than 100 metres on (at 0945), we ran out of places to put our feet.

It was time to do a retrace and test a lower ledge. This also proved non-negotiable, so we returned to our ascent point and tested the ledge to the east. With some scrambling and persistence, we arrived at the Newnes Natural Arch at 1000.

The Arch is a collapsed-fault block structure where the rocks close to the cliff line have failed and dropped away, while outer weathered and structurally stronger sandstone has survived intact.

<sup>30</sup> The Antlions are a group of about 2,000 species of insect in the family *Myrmeleontidae*, known for the fiercely predatory habits of their larvae, which in many species dig pits to trap passing ants or other prey. The adult insects are less well known, as they mostly fly at dusk or after dark, and may be mistakenly identified as Dragonflies or Damselflies; they are sometimes known as Antlion Lacewings, and in North America, the larvae are sometimes referred to as Doodlebugs because of the strange marks they leave in the sand.

Antlions are worldwide in distribution. The greatest diversity occurs in the tropics, but a few species are found in cold temperate locations, one such being the European *Euroleon nostras*. They most commonly occur in dry and sandy habitats where the larvae can easily excavate their pits, but some larvae hide under debris or ambush their prey among leaf litter.





Ledge walking east of the Newnes Natural Arch. PHOTO: BRIAN FOX

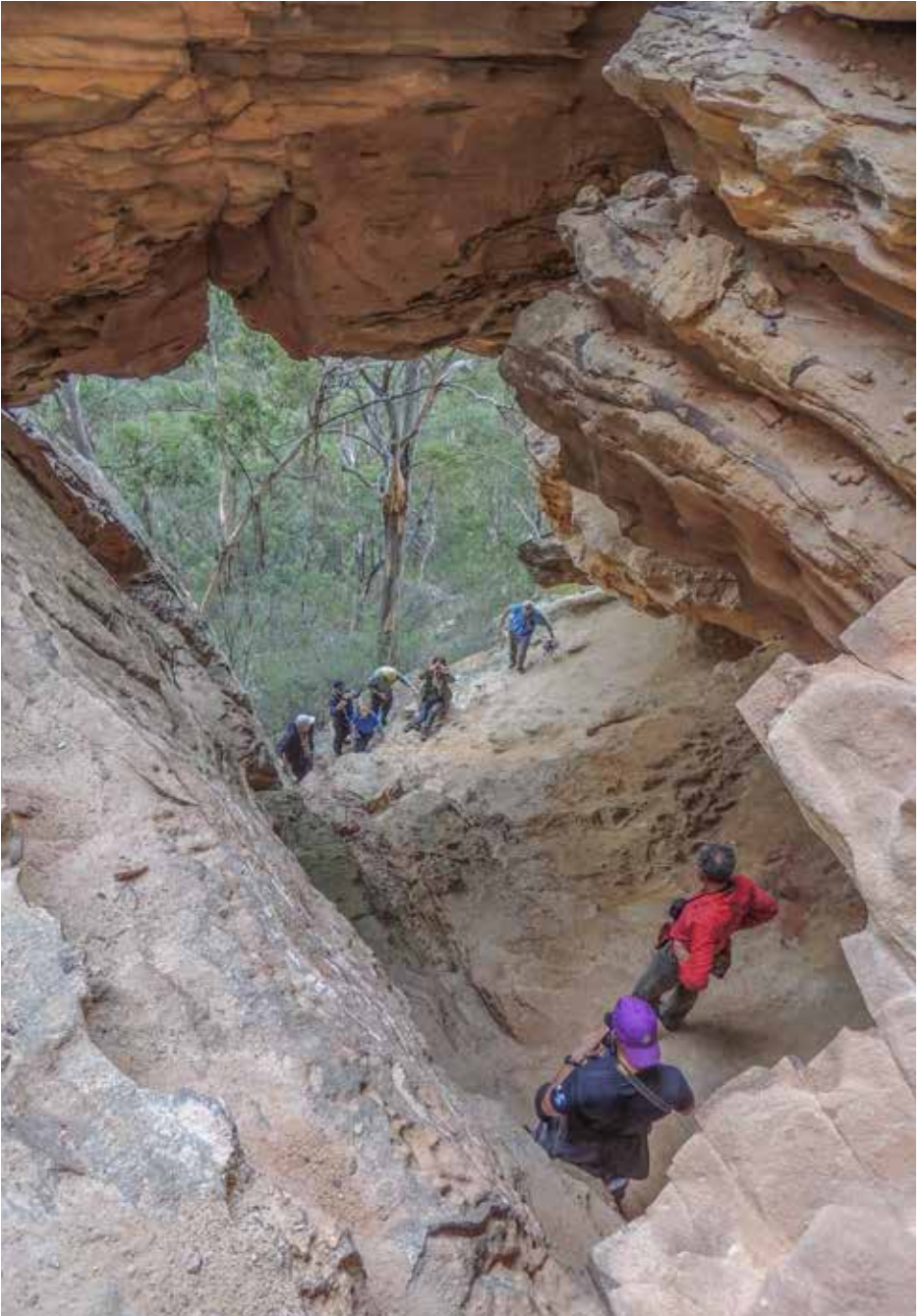


The Newnes Natural Arch. PHOTO: BRIAN FOX

The result is a truly dramatic cubist-like feature with strong geometric elements. The arch is approximately two and a half metres wide, about six metres long and about the same distance above the sloping floor. We spent more than 15 minutes at this feature. Several members of the party climbed to the top, which resulted in some truly special photos.

Leaving the arch, we noted that immediately to the east the cliffs are embellished with rock climbers' symbols. Two of these were easy to record. The first was a filled square with the letter K, while the other also had a filled square with the letters BCO alongside.

Elated by the quality of the Newnes Natural Arch coupled with a temporary



Rectilinear block faulting, Newnes Natural Arch. PHOTO: BRIAN FOX.





Berenice under the cliff line next to Newnes Natural Arch. PHOTO: YURI BOLOTIN

reprieve by the weather, we decided to see whether it was possible to follow the top of the talus slope all the way to Cathedral Canyon. This proved to be a delightful option as we explored a new route in some very attractive terrain. The cliff base was easy to negotiate, although there were a couple of spots where exposure could concern some walkers. The best discovery was a long overhang at GR 4217 2681, 682 m.

At 1051, we intersected the waterway in Cathedral Canyon after passing through an amazing transition in vegetation, from dry Sclerophyll forest

into a Coachwood/Sassafras one, delightfully peppered with Rough Tree Ferns, *Cyathea australis*. Before commencing the descent, Brian shared a mandarin with the group – one segment each! Brian was the only member of the party to bring his backpack and first aid pack. Before leaving, we made a bad decision: ‘This will be a short exercise, so we will not even need morning tea...’ We advise our readers not to follow that example.

Towards the end of the canyon, we walked south west rather than following it the usual way down. The result was



The party is dwarfed by the cliff line near Newnes Natural Arch. PHOTO: MARK FORTH



The Little Capertee Creek Camping Ground seen from the top of the Newnes Natural Arch. The smaller cleared area is on the south side of the Wolgan River. PHOTO: BRIAN FOX

the discovery of a collection of old building foundations, both brick and dimensioned sandstone from the Newnes industrial era, at GR 4236 2635, 507 m. The vehicles were

reached at 1131, by which time eating was a top priority for all.

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*Total distance walked 4 km.*

*Total ascents 300 m.*

Table of times, locations and grid references – Walk 2.7 Newnes Natural Arch.

TIME	LOCATION	GRID REFERENCE	ELEVATION
0918	Park at Little Capertee Creek Camping Ground	4234 2632	505 m
0922	Commence walking	4234 2632	505 m
0932	Climbing the talus slope	4205 2649	650 m
0937	Base of first cliff line	4198 2653	700 m
0942	Dry overhang	4194 2650	700 m
0945	Commence retrace	4190 2650	700 m
0951	Commence retrace from second no-go point	4194 2647	685 m
1000	At Newnes Natural Arch, 20 minutes	4201 2656	705 m
1021	Rock climber's graffiti	4204 2658	695 m
1036	Long overhang	4217 2681	682 m
1052	Intersect with Cathedral Canyon watercourse	4233 2697	670 m
1113	Descending Cathedral Canyon	4232 2658	530 m
1124	Old foundations, Newnes industrial period	4236 2635	507 m
1131	At vehicles	4234 2632	505 m