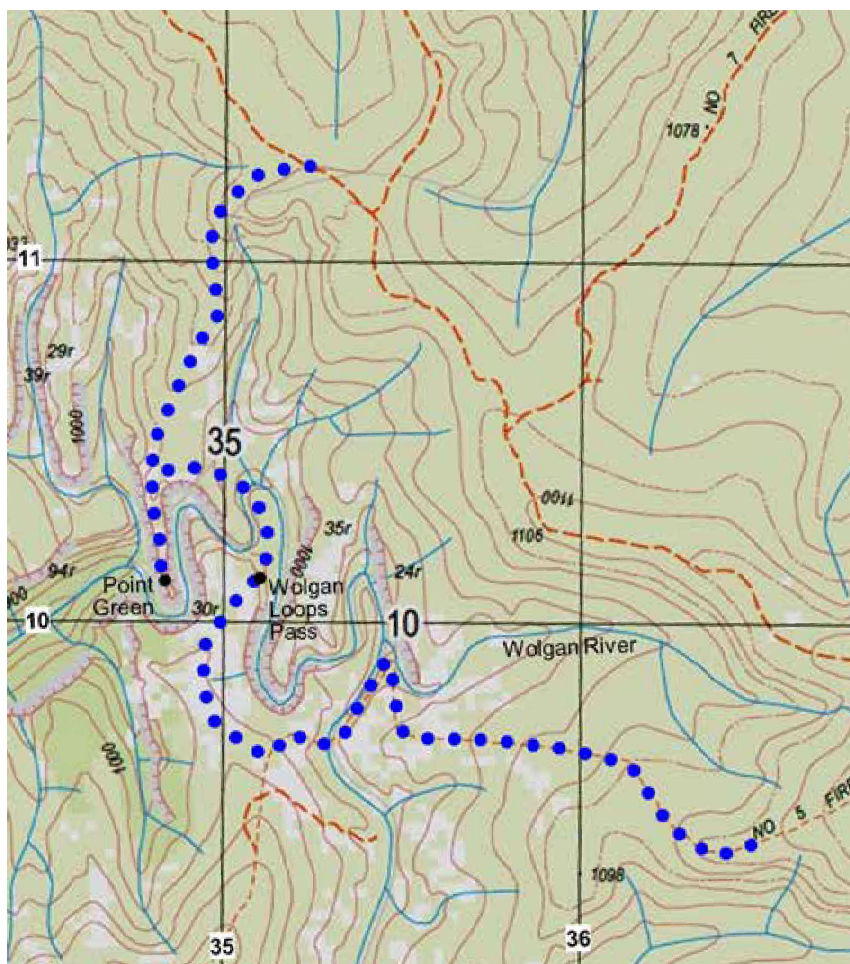


Walk 9.23 Wolgan Loops and Point Green



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



View towards Wolgan Loops from a pagoda climbed during the approach walk. Photo: Brian Fox.

Maps, etc.	Department of Lands topographic map Cullen Bullen 8931-3N, 1:25,000, second edition. GPS setting WGS 84.
Walk description and route	Park one vehicle on Fire Trail No. 5 off Sunnyside Ridge Road and another near Fire Trail No. 8. From the first vehicle, walk to above the Wolgan Loops, then make our way to Point Green and, eventually, the second vehicle. About 6 km.
Gear issues	First aid kit, two litres of water. GPS, PLB, appropriate head- and footwear, electrolytes, maps, compass, tape (leader only). Have clothes to change into in the car for afterwards.
Comments	Scrambling and exposure.
Date walked	21 July 2018.



THE WEATHER

An icy start to the day, with some residual snow in protected places. A clear sky with chilling winds abating after midday. Temperature range 2 to 10 degrees C.

TRACK NOTES

Note: *Time references in the text relate to grid references in the table at the end of these Track Notes.*

As a passenger, one sees the landscape somewhat differently to a driver. Several observations from the drive in are worth documenting:

1. The railway yard at Clarence is now fenced off, and work is apparently under way to reopen the Clarence Zig Zag Railway. The amenities block can still be accessed.
2. Signage has been erected explaining the importance of Browns Swamp and the function these specialised environments perform.
3. The number of unlicensed bike riders has increased significantly, and the damage wrought is more extensive and more pronounced.
4. The need to control vehicle access to Newnes Plateau away from the Glowworm Tunnel/Sunnyside Ridge-Blackfellows Hands Road system is urgent if the environmental wealth of the plateau is to be saved.
5. Policing of unregistered vehicles and prosecuting offending drivers needs to be implemented forthwith.

6. The number of abandoned and wrecked vehicles is increasing. The Lithgow City Council/State Forests/NPWS need to act to remove them.

As we approached the junction of the Old Bells Line of Road and State Mine Gully Road, light drifts of snow were seen above 1180 metres. Some of them were still around when we exited the area at 1430. I also mused that I had been here in midsummer 10 years ago, when we tried to float down

through the Wolgan Loops on surf mats in searing heat.

Taking the initiative for the walk today, Yuri had reviewed the maps and earlier track notes and constructed a walk that was just so different, discovering a new pass and novel approaches. By 0948, we had completed a vehicle shuffle, done the introductions and started walking.

At 0959, our group left Fire Trail No. 5, walked a short distance off track, then



OPPOSITE PAGE: Old Gum tree near Fire Trail No.5. Photo: Merridy Cairn-Duff.

LEFT: A stand of Stringybarks, *Eucalyptus obliqua*, by the Wolgan River. Photo: Henry Gold.



climbed a small pagoda to gain an appreciation of the Wolgan Loops area, at 1013. Even from the top of a six-metre pagoda, you can tell that it is an area full of interest, with successive waves of cliff lines, shadows cast across voids, and isolated platy pagoda heads popping up above the skyline.

Leaving our viewpoint, we attempted to descend straight towards the westernmost loop of the river, but a continuous cliff line put paid to the idea. Instead, we kept edging along the top northwards until we rejoined the road. It was then easy to follow the heavily

scoured-out trail down through a massive wide-open gate, passed at 1017, and a fence, to an unnamed tributary creek.

The road then doubled back on itself and closely followed under the same cliffs we had tried to descend along the Wolgan River for about 200 metres. From down below, it was easy to see why we could not descend. A 20-metre tape would have just made it possible.

The road traversed several river crossings, which were all easily negotiated by 1023. A number of these creek crossings have been stabilised with crushed basalt

brought in from another locality. Being a former forestry road, the basalt could have been trucked in from anywhere. I had previously taken a sample home and determined that it is a rich olivine basalt that does not occur locally.

Still using the scoured-out track that was Fire Trail No. 5, we proceeded a bit further along the Wolgan River, then up steeply about 30 metres on a now completely undrivable section. Even a monster 4WD would have difficulty in negotiating this. The consequential environmental damage is a disaster that will only become worse.

Leaving the old trail at 1032 where it nearly levelled, we made our way through light scrub, heading generally in a northwesterly direction. At 1045, the party reached a stunning pagoda, which was chosen for morning tea. This high location (at 1031 m), positioned south, above and between two of the Wolgan Loops, provided a feast of viewing and photographic opportunities. Not allowing us to become too relaxed, Yuri called time at 1055, and we were back into discovery mode again.

1109 and 1123 found the party at two other unforgettable viewing locations.



OPPOSITE PAGE: Ridges above the Wolgan Loops. Photo: Henry Gold.

ABOVE: The tip of Point Green from above the Wolgan Loops. Photo: Henry Gold.



ABOVE: On the high pagoda above the westernmost of the Wolgan Loops.
Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

RIGHT: A fantastic beast on top of one of the Wolgan Loops pagodas.
Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP: Wolgan River gorge from the eastern side, opposite Point Green.
Photo: Henry Gold.

Diah Hendarwan on one of the promontory ridges between one of the Wolgan Loops.
Photo: Yuri Bolotin.





LEFT: Evgenia Obriadina taking a panoramic photo of the Wolgan Loops landscape. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

BELOW: Ironstone fluting on a pagoda. Photo: Henry Gold.



Sited above the Wolgan River and with great views of the magical Point Green, the group was granted a few minutes to enjoy, capture, and record.

Somewhat dazed and bedazzled by so much glorious natural sculpture, we made slow progress until, at 1143, the site of a rare pass discovered by Yuri on a previous walk was reached. Known today as the Wolgan Loops Pass, it provides a singular way of route down through the cliffs to a long spur and a safe crossing of the Wolgan River. The pass includes a small tricky section at the bottom where assistance in

descending 1.3 metres was welcome but not really necessary. The group made it to the bottom of the pass by 1159. The total descent is about 33 metres, a far cry from the generally twice that height along the cliffs elsewhere. It is an easy walk from the base of the pass to the river.

The party crossed the Wolgan River at 1207. What goes down also needs to go up, so it was no surprise that we spent the next quarter of an hour or so climbing up yet another great pagoda with panoramic views. As it was now 1226, lunch was called with the bonus of time for exploring

another viewing point over the Wolgan Loops complex directly to the south of our location. I divided my time so that lunch was eaten quickly and time could be spent enjoying yet another view.

To try and describe this area adequately is near to impossible. On either side of the viewer, there are two major loops. Looking south south west is the main section of a high-level gorge before the final loop and Wolgan Falls. The total distance of the gorge in view is about 400 metres. I had tried walking in the gorge, but it is almost impossible due to the huge number of large house-sized

boulders, a great deal of very big broken timber pieces suspended aerially, and the need to thread our way up and down through all this every few metres.

After this break and the wrapping-up of the lunch interlude, it was a wonderful pagoda-contouring experience to reach the spine of Green Spur, at 1305. Here, three of the party elected to have a rest in the sun while the others went to inspect Point Green. I had already been there several years previously before it was named by Yuri. The destination is spectacular. The group returned at 1357, having stopped at a



LEFT: Wolgan Falls from near Point Green. Photo: Brian Fox.

BELOW: Wolgan River gorge (looking east) from Point Green approach. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



lookout over the Wolgan Loops at 1322 and at the point itself at 1335.

Regrouping, we then set off generally northward to pick up faint traces of a long-abandoned access track, which I have identified and annotated on my Cullen Bullen topographic map as Fire Trail No. 9. As you get closer to Sunnyside Ridge Road, this track becomes more

defined and ultimately an almost drivable road. I have also numbered three other tracks, so the sequence goes all the way to Fire Trail No. 12.³⁶

The vehicles were reached at 1420 and the shuffle completed 15 minutes later.

Trip statistics: total distance 6.1 km; total ascent 252 m.

36. Fire Trail No. 9 joins Sunnyside Ridge Road at GR 352 113, Fire Trail No. 10 at GR 348 118, Fire Trail No. 11 at GR 344 118, and Fire Trail No. 12 at GR 339 120.

TABLE OF TIMES, LOCATIONS AND GRID REFERENCES

Time	Location	Grid Reference	Elevation
0929	Park the vehicles near Fire Trail No. 8	3522 1127	1,070 m
0948	Start of walk on Fire Trail No. 5	3649 0940	1,110 m
0959	Leave fire trail and head towards pagoda	3550 0969	1,026 m
1013	Climb pagoda and view	3542 0978	1,010 m
1017	Gate	3548 0986	998 m
1023	Olivine basalt roadfill	3543 0983	981 m
1027	Steep climb	3527 0966	984 m
1032	Left the old trail	3515 0965	1,018 m
1045	View and morning tea, 10 minutes	3494 0983	1,031 m
1109	View over loops + Point Green, 5 minutes	3499 1004	1,015 m
1123	On pagoda above Wolgan River, 7 minutes	3496 1006	1,008 m
1143	Top of Wolgan Loops Pass	3509 1010	1,010 m
1159	Bottom of Wolgan Loops Pass	3512 1021	977 m
1207	Crossed Wolgan River	3508 1040	962 m
1226	Climbing a pagoda + lunch + explore, 22 minutes	3494 1038	1,001 m
1305	Beginning of Point Green (Green Spur)	3480 1044	1,014 m
1322	Lookout en-route, 3 minutes	3485 1021	1,009 m
1335	Point Green, 5 minutes	3484 1010	1,008 m
1357	Return from Point Green	3480 1044	1,014 m
1420	At vehicles near Fire Trail No. 8	3522 1127	1,070 m
1435	Shuffle completed	3649 0940	1,110 m



ABOVE: Bushwalkers at Point Green. Photo: Merridy Cairn-Duff.

APPENDIX. About Newnes Sand Dunes Seen As We Walked Along Sunnyside Ridge Road

On 18 April 2010, I was privileged to join Dr Paul Hesse, an Earth scientist, and a posse of his students on a field visit to one of the several Holocene (last 20,000 years) sand dunes to be found on the Newnes Plateau.³⁷

The centre of activity for the next hour or so was on the crest of the dune at GR 0235289 6311203. Having driven along this section of the road many times, I was surprised that I had never taken the time or made the mental effort to question why suddenly the road and roadside cuttings were sandy. I now knew, as I was given an explanation of the formation of the dune during Holocene time. Some extracts from Hesse's paper are set out below,³⁸

Sand dunes on the Newnes Plateau (1,000 m above sea level), west of Sydney, were active during the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM). The scattered sand dunes are forested under the modern humid, temperate climate regime. Dune types range from parabolic to transverse lee dunes and sand sheets or patches. All point to the presence of conditions marginal for aeolian activity, made possible through wind acceleration on windward slopes, ready sand supply from the weathered sandstone

37. Several sand dune sites have been identified on the Newnes Plateau. The dunes are of at least two kinds: parabolic or anchored dunes, and unanchored dunes.

38. Hesse, P.P. et al. *Late Quaternary Aeolian Dunes on the Presently Humid Blue Mountains, Eastern Australia.*



LEFT TO RIGHT: Wolgan River gorge (looking west) from Point Green approach. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Galls on a gum leaf. Photo: Brian Fox.

Coral Fungus, *Ramaria sp.* Photo: Brian Fox.



of the plateau and sparse vegetation cover. Modern climate envelopes of sand dune activity in Australia predict that unrealistically drier conditions are necessary to allow wind transport at this site. Only additional impediments to plant growth, such as lower temperature and lower atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations, appear to allow the necessary conditions for dune formation. These observations and conclusions extend our understanding of the extremes of the LGM climate in humid eastern Australia, confirming that the widespread treeless vegetation was also sparse, even in areas that today have annual rainfall above 1,000 mm.

We envisage the dunes and sand sheets in cold late Pleistocene times as being vegetated by monocotyledon and dicotyledon herbs and sparse shrubs, but not by trees. Fires occurred, ignited by lightning (less frequent than now) or by people. Burning the short non-woody vegetation cover would completely expose the ground surface to the wind, there being a negligible boundary layer. Cold temperatures would cause frequent cryoturbation of the clayey sand soils by needle ice and lift loose soil into the wind stream. Where wind was focused to high velocity on windward slopes, sand would be saltated rapidly to the lee of the crests to build a dune. Conditions suitable for dune

building must have been reached at only a few sites, as the dunes are impressive but uncommon landforms in the western Blue Mountains. Some may have been dispersed by water erosion after they became inactive, but the Sunnyside and Carne dunes are large and distinctive and have survived so well that we suspect that dunes like them were always rare.

The Sunnyside Dune

The Sunnyside Dune is a crescent-shaped body of sand, 280 m long, 70–110 m wide, up to 4.6 m thick and thinning at the edges, with an estimated volume of 50,000 m³. It is located adjacent to the edge of the Newnes Plateau on the

Sunnyside Track in the Newnes State Forest. The dune occurs at an altitude of 1080 m at the head of a narrow steep valley that drops to the Wolgan River 120 m below. The transverse lee dune is oriented northwest–southeast, approximately parallel to the curvature of the plateau’s rim at the head of the valley.

Several features of the sand bodies strongly suggest an aeolian origin. The three-dimensional shape of the Sunnyside, Carne and Pine sand bodies suggests that they are dune forms. The large sand bodies have the clearly defined crests and margins of discrete sand bodies and lie unconformably on the land surface.