

# MOUNT DAWSON AND GINDANTHERIE PINNACLE

## MAPS ETC

Department of Lands topographic map Ben Bullen, 8931-4S, 1:25000, second edition. GPS setting WGS 84.

## WALK DESCRIPTION AND ROUTE

Park cars at a gate on the old road leading up Little Capertee Creek. Walk up Little Capertee Creek to a significant central ridge where the creek bifurcates and the old road ends. Climb the nose and then negotiate the ridge to the escarpment. From this point traverse the heavily dissected plateau south to near Mount

Dawson. Return the same way. 200m +&-. Footpad and off track, about 12km.

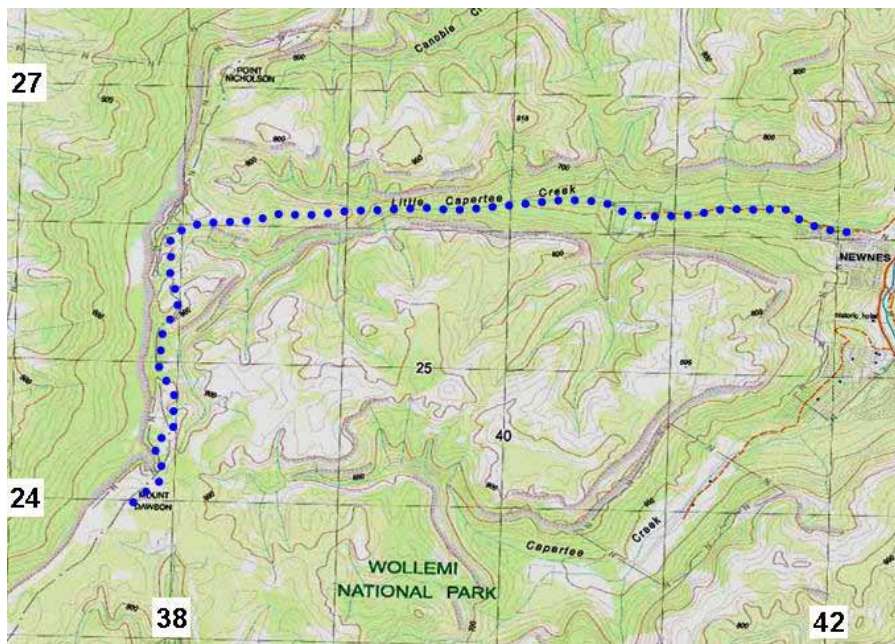
## GEAR ISSUES

4-5 litres of water (there is no reliable water on Mount Dawson), full pack electrolytes, maps, compass, GPS, camera. Tent optional as camp caves are available.

## COMMENTS

Spectacular views over Pantoneys Crown, the Orchid Slot and those wonderful pagodas.

Dates walked 30th-31st August 2006.



Source © Land and Property Management Authority, Panorama Avenue, Bathurst NSW 2795. [www.lpma.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lpma.nsw.gov.au)

## TRACK NOTES

### Day 1.

As you step out of the lead car at Wolgan Gap and are waiting for the convoy to catch up, your senses must grapple with a change in scale – a scale of magnitude that defines the Wolgan and Capertee Valleys. There is a massiveness that dwarfs other similar areas. The next most wonderful thing is the purity of the air. There was just the faintest trace of rain around, enough to settle the dust, wash the trees and give that slightly peppery but unmistakably central western NSW

country aroma. What a great place to be, and soon to be walking.

The other vehicles caught up and we were then on our way down into the Wolgan Valley. As we passed the Woolpack Rock, Woolpack Gap and Collett Gap I already wanted to be at our destination and starting. The magnetism of this place for a bushwalker is irresistible. Less than 1000m to the east the impossibly complex pagodas of Mount Wolgan and Donkey Mountain also beckoned.

As we passed the confluence of the Barton Creek and the Wolgan



Brian Fox on the cliff edge near Gindantherie Pinnacle Photo: John Fox

River, the valley narrows and the cliffs appear higher than ever. The Wolgan flows clear and close to the road and the wattle was in full bloom, suffusing the scene in gold. Nature was in a playful mood. There was still a trace of rain in the air as we parked outside the old Newnes Hotel, (circa 1907).

Here others joined us and the group was now complete. Graham facilitated the introductions before we drove the last few hundred metres to leave the vehicles and start our deep communion with this spiritual area.



Cliff line slot overlooking the Capertee Valley  
Photo: Brian Fox

At the gate 'he' appeared. He was almost an apparition, a shock of sun bleached dirty white hair over a deeply suntanned visage, his shirt collar erect around his neck, black with sweat and dirt, arising out of an equally dirty blue jacket, bright grey eyes scanning us knowingly from beneath grotesque hedges of straw that passed as eyebrows.

'Yer can drive another kilometre,' was the greeting, 'the road's open past my place for the neighbour and the gate's never closed.' 'You're walkers – good luck to ya'. 'I'm Glen, Glen Day', as he proffered a gnarled hand with fingernails outlined in ingrained black. Then he was gone. We had met a local.

0950 and we were on our way. It was a special morning. Bits of blue sky were struggling to get through the cloud. As we swung up the old road, again it tried to rain, and then the sun won through. There is a section of wattle along here that can only be described as incandescent in its glory. If it was ever necessary to prove our national colours should be green and gold, this is the valley and the place to do it. Click, click went the camera.

By 1010 we had negotiated the old track to its terminus and, where it had been washed away, we walked in the Little Capertee Creek itself. Time for a good long drink before ascending





On the climb up to Mount Dawson, left to right, Peter Fox, Michael Papworth, Kaye Birch, Tony Hickson, Peter Stebbing, Morrie Donovan and John Cooper Photo: Michael Keats

the nose that divides the creek into minor and major sections. Earlier I had offered to travel as 'Tail End Charlie'. When not leading I like this role for many reasons. One of them is that you feel no pressure and the other is that there is time to savour each view and to capture images.

The ascent is very beautiful. The weathering rocks are lichen encrusted, wattle blooms everywhere while architectural *Xanthorrhoeas* and Old Man Banksias give perfect harmony and balance. A real bonus is the unfolding view of the valley back towards Newnes – the perpendicular

cliffs bathed in sunlight. At the top of the major crest (about 120m up) there was time to drop the packs, re-hydrate and enjoy a quiet moment reflecting on how lucky bushwalkers in Sydney are. Just think - 2 ½ hours away 4 million people are oblivious to some of the most beautiful scenery the planet has to offer. Another part of me says thank heavens they are!

Emerging onto the western edge of the cliffs is like looking down on creation – the Capertee Valley is magnificent; the field of vision goes forever, the bushwalking / exploring opportunities unlimited. I think I now



Orchid Slot, Yellow Rock Orchid (*Liparis reflexa*), Mount Dawson Photo: Brian Fox

know why there are many copies of the Glen Alice 1:50,000 sheet in the Bush Club library. It is extraordinary country and the Genowlan Plateau to the north is a compelling destination.

Sated with glorious views, we then headed south through multiple labyrinthine tracks, slots and defiles. A side slot is known as the Orchid Pass. Named for the profusion of 3 species of orchids encrusting the walls – *Thelychiton speciosum*, *Dendrobium striolatum* and *Liparis reflexa*. We were just a bit early to see them in their full glory.

The lunch spot was chosen with care. It would be hard to find a place of greater dramatic effect. Here, there is an erosion residual of superb proportions. It has been given many informal names by bushwalkers ranging from ‘The 4th Sister’ (relating to The Three Sisters at Katoomba) to ‘The Lost Sister’ to ‘The Bread Knife’ and ‘The Blade’.

I do not believe any of these names to be appropriate – the residual monolith is too grand and I would propose that it be called the “Gindantherie Needle<sup>1</sup>”. I make this recommendation on the fact that it is a perfect cylinder and the name Gindantherie is a recognised local area name as in the Parish of Gindantherie.

Feeling heady from lunch, we continued our pilgrimage with a walk that offered more and more delights. There is another place (apparently unnamed) that deserves proper recognition and that is a protruding rock overhanging the Wolgan Valley from the cliffs that only those with zero fear of heights or self destructing goats would visit.



Gindantherie Pinnacle Photo: Brian Fox

<sup>1</sup> The latest (second) edition of Ben Bullen 1:25,000 topographic map includes this name but modified to Gindantherie Pinnacle. Current GNB policy restricts the description of features. Words such as ‘tower’, ‘needle’, ‘obelisk’, ‘pylon’, etc are regrettably not permitted for official use.





Crest of Mount Dawson Photo: Brian Fox

This place has a logical name based on observation. I would designate it “Commandments Rock”. First it is apparently suspended in space. Second there are on the top of its level surface, scattered by nature in a very appropriate way, 10 tablets of stone – one for each commandment. When one of our number climbed it, the setting for a God- to- Man event complete with residual evidence, was perfect.

At 1500 we walked into the cave area, the site of our camp. It is yet another example of the diversity of erosion residuals in this amazing country. The caves are more like a section of a canyon with many shelf like structures

spread over a distance of about 75m. The walls tower 15 –20m. There are small caves, platforms and larger areas with delightful dry powdery sand floors. What makes it so unusual is that far from being in the bottom of a valley, it is 900m above sea level.

The biggest decision for each of us was where to set up camp? In the end we scattered over the area. The biggest group being 4 at what was affectionately called ‘Upper Mount Dawson’ as it was elevated 2 metres above the base level. One of us had a private cave, another a platform with a view, yet another two pitched tents although there was little reason to do so.

A walk of some 200m took us to a vantage point with stunning views over the valley and Pantoneys Crown. It was here some time later where we gathered with pre dinner drinks to watch the sun set. The sky was a tapestry of nature's best with a mix of cloud types, colours and a wonderful light play. There is something very special about a warming glass of cheer, convivial company, a great setting and the golden orb of Phoebe's cart sinking behind the mountains while the selvedge of the clouds suffused pink, then gold before the colour drained away.

The moon and stars complemented the firelight over dinner. Conversations and discussions finally ebbed at about 0820 when 'Goodnights' were exchanged and a hush descended.

## **Day 2.**

A was a bit of a shock to the system to be woken up at 0625 and be the last person in camp to greet the new day. The whole area was enveloped in mist and I had slept in. Then I remembered. At 0630 we had agreed to again climb to the top of Mount Dawson and look at the view.



A fern filled slot near Gindantherie Pinnacle Photo: Brian Fox





Pausing on the climb up to Mount Dawson Photo: Michael Keats

So, at 0640 without even a cup of tea I joined the party. It was only a ten minute walk and we were there, on top, on the highest point. The view, well it could have been anything – it was a total white out. There were however wonderful rocks to photograph.

Later, and before departure a second party revisited and enjoyed the views. I did not bother returning as my camera batteries (2 of them) were both exhausted from overuse the previous day!

By 0900 the return journey was underway. It was so hard to leave. At a key point at the top end of a major slot we stopped on a rock platform that is the equal of Mount Dawson. Just by rotating the head you can scan the valley of Red Rock Creek to Point Cornell; the headwaters of Little Capertee Creek where the narrowest of spaces separates the source point from the shear drop off into the Capertee Valley and the chasm like gorge as the Little Capertee Creek plunges a hundred metres or so. A full



Morning mist clinging to the cliffs above Little Capertee Creek Photo: Michael Keats

180 degrees and due east is the crest of a mountain only designated as 2987 E 317 on the 1:50,000 sheet of Glen Davis (Edition 1 AAS).

This special place also has no name. I would call it 'The Presence Table' because that is what it is. It is a place where my spiritual fibres started to tingle. Not many places do that to me.

1050 and it was time for morning tea at yet another compelling viewing spot. Then to give us a well deserved break from perpetual beauty we headed east along a timbered ridge that lead us to the descent point down into Little Capertee Valley. At 1145 sat on the top of the nose and reflected on the myriad joys of the last few

hours before commencing the climb down.

By 1250 we were opposite a little cottage and outhouses that a member of the party advised he had stayed at on a previous walk. Curious, we had a good look around and checked on the amenities. A suspicious wombat eyed us off, disappointed there were no food offerings.

Twenty five minutes on, the packs were loaded into cars and we salivated at the thought of ice creams from the old hotel kiosk. It was a bit of a shock to the system to find the place closed and the nearest ice cream a good hour away.



The northern cliff line from Mount Dawson Photo: Yuri Bolotin



# TABLE OF TIMES, LOCATIONS AND GRID REFERENCES.

Date	Time	Location	Grid Reference
30/08/06	0950	Leave vehicles	419 261
	1000	Old property boundary and gate	409 262
	1010	End of road	392 262
	1110	Top of climb & am tea	390 261
	1215	Cliff edge	390 261
	1220	Orchid Pass	390 260
	1300	Lunch and Gindantherie Pinnacle Commandments Rock	378 254
	1435	Commandments Rock	380 255
	1500	Cave and set up camp	379 245
	1600	Mount Dawson and return	378 240
	1735	Another trip to Mount Dawson for drinks	
	2115	Bedtime	
31/08/06	0630	Leave for walk to Mount Dawson	
	0900	Break camp	
	0930	Commandments Rock	380 255
	0950	Morning tea	378 258
	1145	Top of descent	390 261
	1210	At end of old road	392 262
	1250	Inspected old dwelling	409 262
	1315	Return to vehicles	419 261



Overlooking Red Rock Creek from Mount Dawson  
Photo: Brian Fox