

# Newnes adventure

3 day trip 28 – 31 December 2015. Planned as a camping trip to relax after Christmas and see the old mining ruins and Glow Worm tunnel.

Trip was originally planned as a private trip but added to the web site very late. In the end there were no takers so it was just a trip for me.

Left Penrith on 28 Dec mild 21 degrees but arrived in Katoomba and it was only 10C with light rain and fog. I was thinking I needed more warm clothes. No one to meet, so I drove to Lidsdale and turned off to Newnes. Winding sealed road down through the valley with the last 9kms of dirt road into Newnes. Past the hotel (no longer has a licence) and across the creek. I set up camp in the large grassed area. No power, no water, no showers just long drop toilets. Plenty of space for many campers in a great amphitheatre between the huge sandstone cliffs.

The weather cleared, the sun came out and the temperature climbed over the next few days to very comfortable summer days. A short drive across the ford in the creek opposite the hotel and past the old rail station platform takes you to the locked gate and the walking track to the industrial ruins. The old shale oil mining site was built in 1901 and abandoned in 1940. A lot of the buildings were

salvaged but the coke ovens, brickwork, retaining walls and footings are still visible. Its incredible that they built something so vast in such rugged terrain. Mother nature is rapidly reclaiming the ruins. You need to allow about 1.5 hours to follow the walking trail around the ruins and investigate all the sites. The mining site was also serviced by a specially built railway. The old station platform is all that is left in Newnes itself. The railway was constructed in just thirteen months through very steep terrain. From the valley floor it rises to the very base of the sheer sandstone cliffs, where they tunnelled through to meet the main rail line.

If you are familiar with the Glow Worm tunnel from previous trips you probably entered via the Zig Zag end. But it is also accessible from Newnes by foot. You can drive back along the Wolgan road a few Kms from the camp site and park at the signpost to the walking trail. It is about 1.5hrs walk to the Glow Worm tunnels and it is mostly up hill. It follows the old rail line but it too was salvaged when the work ceased. The line is barely visible except for a few cuttings, the retaining walls and the odd sleeper. It is quite uphill slog and the rail line is mostly over grown. There are a lot of wash aways and rock falls to climb over. At the top you can investigate the Glow Worm tunnel (be sure to take a torch). The return 1.5 hrs downhill isn't any easier on the legs.

The remaining time was relaxing in the camp, looking through the museum at the Hotel and recovering from Christmas festivities. There are some 4x4 trails nearby such as the Black Fellows Hand trail and Gardens of Stone. I highly recommend Newnes for anyone looking for an easy family trip and a bit of walking or as a base for the 4x4 tracks.

Kevin Chidgey

Coke Ovens at Newnes mining ruins  
Glow Worm tunnel at Newnes  
Rail Cutting at base of cliff  
Camp Site at Newnes

