



Barnett Peak Climbing Guide

Ross Weiter, Dec 2003

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A WARNING ABOUT ROCK CLIMBING

Climbing is a sport where you may be seriously injured or killed. Read this before you use this book.

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Therefore, be warned that you must exercise your own judgement with regard to the route location, description, difficulty and your ability to safely protect yourself from the risks of rock climbing. Examples of these risks are: falling due to technical difficulty or holds breaking off, falling rock, climbing equipment dropped by other climbers, equipment failure and failure of protection including fixed protection such as bolts.

You should not depend on any information gleaned from this book for your personal safety. Your safety depends on your own experience, equipment and climbing skill. If you have any doubt as to your ability to safely attempt any route described in this guidebook, do not attempt it.

The inclusion in this Guide of any crag does not imply that any member of the public has a right of access to the crag or the right to climb upon it.

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INTRODUCTION

Barnett Peak is 360 km south of Perth, on the north edge of the west Stirling Ranges, refer to 1:100,000 DOME topographic sheet No.2429-Tambellup.

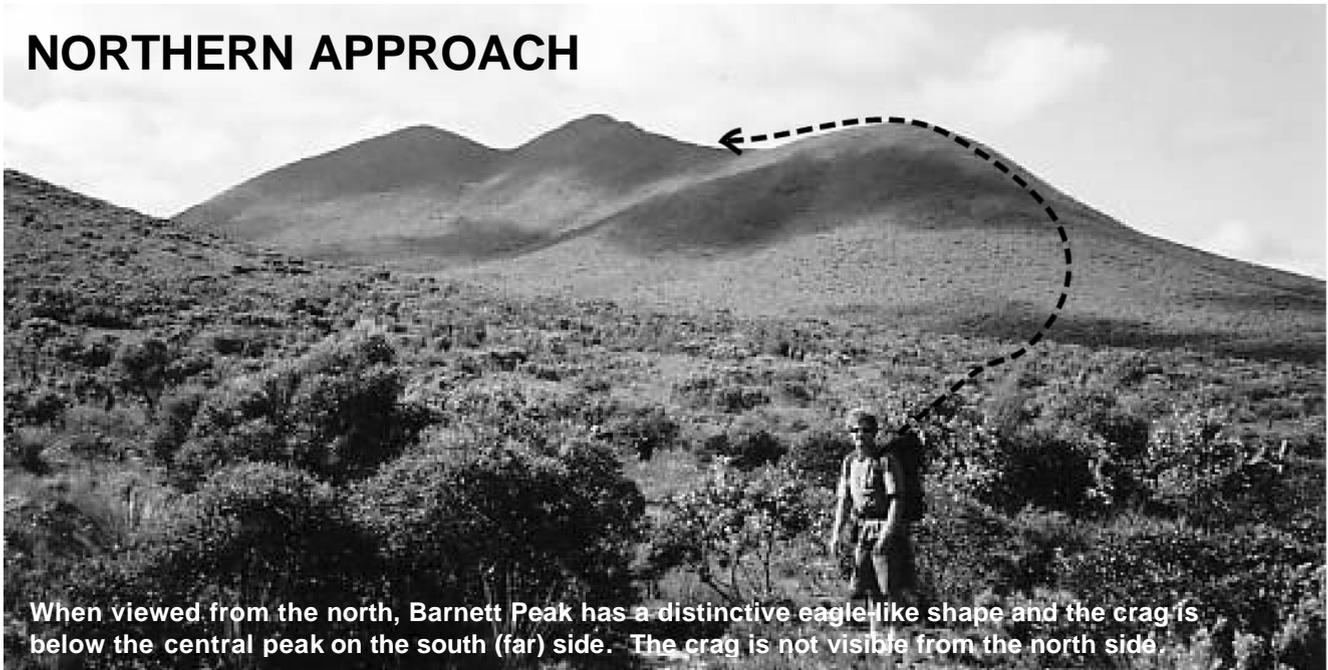
The first recorded route here was done by John Watson and R.Juniper on Easter Monday 1974, a chossy thing appropriately called "Scrofula", rising from the descent gully. Next year, Watson returned with John Waterfall and Harry Kershaw to add a second route "Harry's Price", along with Richard Rathbone and Mike Smith who contributed "Splinter". All these climbs are at the east and west extremities of the main wall. In between them, the main wall remained unclimbed, not surprisingly since any routes done here without cams and small nuts would have been very dangerous and neither was available at the time.

Twenty-three years later Ross Weiter was walking along a fire break in the area and battled up to the crag to scope out the imposing south-west face. Things looked good, so a few months later Ross returned with Toc Foale and they set upon the "Wall of Angry Birds", up the highest part of the crag. Unfortunately Toc slipped off a wet mantle shelf at the top of the second pitch, plummeted for eight meters and broke his Achilles tendon. Further exploration was postponed.

Ross returned two years later in September 2000, having lured Richard Wainwright and Gerard Chipper with tall tales of quality virgin rock. The indestructible Toc also returned for a second round, now sporting a rebuilt tendon. Eight routes were put up: some great, some average, some shocking, all with loose rock and great views. One more route was added in 2003, Ross again, this time with the pin-up man of WA climbing, Rob Wall.

And now, with its long scratchy walk in and out-of vogue trad face routes, perhaps Barnett Peak shall sleep again.

NORTHERN APPROACH



SOUTHERN APPROACH



HOW TO GET THERE

Drive south along Albany Highway until the turn left to Cranbrook (sign-posted "Stirling Ranges National Park"). Drive straight through Cranbrook and continue on Salt River Road, which runs along the north edge of the Stirling Ranges National Park. Park the car off this road, 7.3 km east of the t-junction with Red Gum Pass Road (the bitumen ends here), at a large gravel area on the south side of the road.

If you are arriving from the Stirling Ranges Caravan Park, take Salt River Road westwards. The parking area will be 4.8 km west of the junction of Salt River Road and Yetemerup Road.

From the parking area you should be able to see a large peak with three summits to the south. The middle (main) summit is Barnett Peak (elev.765m). Walk through thin scrub up the right hand ridge to the top of right (west) summit, descent to the col between this and the main summit. From the col traverse right across a scree slope, directly to the crag now visible in front of you. The walk in should take between 1 and 1.5 hours. Wear long trousers.

Another (longer) approach along Yetemerup and Barnett Tracks is described by A.T.Morphet in his 1996 book "Mountain Walks In The Stirling Ranges – Part 1", page 26. Allow 2 hours for that one, see photo on this page for final approach.

All climbs described below are on the southwest face of the main summit of Barnett Peak.

FACILITIES

There is a small, partially sheltered bivvi cave R of the lowest section of the wall. In winter and spring there is a morning water drip along the prominent orange water streak at the lowest part of the wall, but don't rely on it.



THE CLIMBS

The usual Stirling Ranges stuff: scrambly approaches and descents, plenty of loose rock and occasionally dodgy gear. These drawbacks are offset by a great wilderness atmosphere, excellent views and great moves on some of the routes. The place is less frightening than Buff Knoll, with no tourists throwing rocks on climbers' heads. Also, the summit seldom gets cloudy, unlike Bluff Knoll.

Old Routes: There are 3 old climbs here, put up in 1974-75: Harry's Price (86m, 10), Splinter (82m, 11) and Scroffula (30m, 4). The descriptions given here are copied from the 1995 CAWA

Guide. As far as can be made out, the first two are located right of the new routes while the last one is left of the new routes. The accuracy of these descriptions was not checked.

Gear: A full rack of cams is required, especially in the small sizes - there are many small horizontal cam placements in the sedimentary rock. Bring a set of nuts, offsets are useful. Two (half) ropes are recommended due to the wandering nature of many of the routes, or alternatively one rope and many long slings. All routes have some loose rock, as per usual in the Stirlings, hence a helmet and attentive belaying are essential. Although the grades are not high, this is adventure climbing requiring a high standard of competency in placing natural protection, which is sparse in places. All gear is natural, i.e. removable and so is some rock. No bolts/pitons were placed.

Walk-offs: For the first 3 routes, walk off via the Barnett Peak summit, then left to the saddle and down the gully on left to base of wall. For all other routes, it is possible to traverse off left some 50 m below the summit, along ledges leading directly into the descent gully.

Orientation: There are two prominent features at the lowest point of the crag. The first one is a bivouac cave (for 2), the second one is an orange water streak some 30m L of this cave. All the modern climbs are left of both features. Routes are described in order, starting from right (R) to left (L), when facing the wall. Also refer to sketch. Due to the featureless nature of most of the wall, the initials of all the routes are scratched out on the rock but weathering may render these invisible. The sketch also shows distances between starts of adjacent routes.

Harry's Price (10, 86m)

Start – A scree slope runs down the R side of the first buttress. Just round to the L of the scree is a bushy corner with an obvious L trending gully. Start in the corner.

- (1) (21m) Up corner for 5m then move L and continue to large ledge with trees.
- (2) (31m) Easily up ramp to turn overhang on L then straight up awkward high steps and easier climbing to stance.
- (3) (34m) Straight up to steep wall behind to bush terrace. Walk across half right to final small buttress, which is climbed direct (crux).

FA: John Watson, John Waterfall, Harry Kershaw, 27/1/75

Splinter (11, 82m)

Start 30m round crag from scree (at the 2nd grass tree) at a left slanting crack/fault.

- (1) (18m) Up fault for 3m, then traverse L up ramp. Straight up to belay ledge and belay by block.
- (2) (30m) Up wall above block. Trend R to belay below large overhangs.
- (3) (13m) Up the overhang and proceed to the top.

FA: Richard Rathbone, Mike Smith (alt.), Peter Riddy, 27/1/75

Now for the modern routes.

The Bold & the Beautiful (110m, 18)

Loose rock at the bottom and top, but the roof is great fun.

(45m, 18) Start in R-facing corner 10m R of bivvi cave. At 6m traverse 4m L along handrail ledge to top of pillar.

Directly up, belay on grassy ledge below L edge of pointy triangular roof.

(15m, 16) Up to L edge of roof, pull through to R on undercling crack and belay on ledge above.

(50m, 6) Scramble up and R, best staying roped.

FA: Ross Weiter, Rob Wall, 29/11/03.

Wall of Angry Birds (15, 90m)

6 m L from the orange water streak is a broken, R-facing, 8m high, rooflet-capped corner. The climb roughly follows a direct vertical line through this to top.

(1) (15, 40m) Directly up to rooflet, exit just R of it (crux) onto a mossy stance. Up to grassy ledge, up R of shallow cave, then up for another 15m to just below orange rock.

(2) (13, 30m) Up broken orange wall for 18 meters, until 4m below overlap. Traverse 4m R, then up on wide grassy ledge and back L slightly.

(3) (8, 20m) Up and slightly trending R for 12 meters, then L through gap to top.

FA: Ross Weiter, Toc Foale (alt.), 21/11/98.

Approximately 30 m L of the orange water streak is a L-facing, L-trending corner capped by a large roof.

** Touch of The Sun (20R, 110m)

A challenging-looking line with a nice move through roof on manky gear, hence R rating.

(1) (20, 25m) Up large L facing corner, trending L to get to below large roof with a hand size crack in its underside and a precarious-looking large block R of crack. Strenuously over the roof to stance on block, then up vertical wall above on sloping holds to belay ledge.

(2) (18, 45m) Up for 2m to grassy ledge, traverse 3m R and up directly from there. At 30m, crux of this pitch is provided by a blank, short, open book corner. Easily up large ledges above to stance.

(3) (7, 40m) Continue to top. Some balancy moves and loose rock make roping up desirable.

FA: Gerard Chipper, Ross Weiter (alt.), 1/10/00.

* Gretchen Goes To Nebraska (16, 73 m)

Who knows why ? An obvious and enjoyable line up cracks at the left end of the large roof.

(1) (28m, 14) Up wall 8m L of T.O.T.S. to the left edge of the large roof. Follow the crack at the end of the roof up for 12m to a narrow but comfortable belay ledge.

(2) (45m, 16) From belay go 3m up crack to choss-covered ledge. Step R and pull through overhanging band. Climb slab to next overhanging band and pull through. Go up broken notch to belay on sloping terrace.

FA: Richard Wainwright, Toc Foale (alt.), 1/10/00

Flossy, Mossy and Chossy (14, 50m)

The name speaks for itself. Start 10m L of G.G.T.N., left of detached block at 7m height.

(1) (25m, 13) Up to moss covered belay stance.

(2) (25m, 14) Continue to top, bypassing overhangs to the right.

FA: Toc Foale, Richard Wainwright (alt.), 30/9/00.

The wall further L is capped by orange overhanging bands at 40m height. The next route starts below the R edge of these bands.

* Agent Orange Overhang (17, 50m)

A scary and loose start but great moves on the second pitch. Start 6m L of F.M.C., at small dead tree.

(1) (35m, 15) Directly up for 20m, then trending L for 15m to belay at the R edge of a huge loose block below the orange overhangs. Large cams required for belay (#2 or #3 Camalot size).

(2) (15m, 17) Up for 2m R of block, then traverse R for 4m, then 1m up, then traverse back left along a good horizontal crack in a superbly exposed position. Pull up through overhangs and continue to walk-off ledge.

This route requires many cams, from very small to medium, plus 2 large ones for first belay.

FA: Ross Weiter, Gerard Chipper (alt.) 30/9/00.

The next four routes have small cairns leaning against the wall at their base.

** Where Eagles Stare (19, 45m)

The best climb here. Start 10 m L of A.O.O. at small cairn, directly below the L edge of the orange overhangs. Up just L of balanced block at 3m height and flake above with a crack. Climb trends very slightly L all the way after that, passing L of large block at 30m (the 1st belay of A.O.O. is on the R side of this). Cranky move through dark overlap just L of orange overhangs. Finish easily to top. Don't worry about circling birds of prey.

FA: Gerard Chipper, Ross Weiter, 30/9/00.

** Pleasant and Direct (14, 45m)

Start 20m L of W.E.S. and 10m R of F.L., at small cairn. The start is directly below a grey, pointed, rippled roof at 40m (the most prominent of the overhangs) and in line with a small protruding block at one third height. Climb directly up, deviating L to avoid overhanging bands. Top out to the R of the pointed roof.

FA: Richard Wainwright, Toc Foale, 30/9/00.

Forest Lawn (15, 45m)

Start 15m L of P.A.D. Up 1m, traverse 2m R, then directly to roof with large detached block at R end at 35m height. Traverse 5m L under overhang, then up vertical wall between overhangs on very small nuts. An interesting start, mossy middle and thinly protected finish.

FA: Ross Weiter, Gerard Chipper, 1/10/00.

Here There Be Lizards (13, 40m)

Start 4m L of F.L.. Directly up to R of crumbly blocks at 6m. Trend R to right of next set of blocks at 15m, then trend L to right hand side of next set of blocks at 22m. Directly above is a squarish overhanging block with an attached tail to the L, go left of this. Pick your way carefully through the broken chossy band and finish. Not much gear, loose rock, moss and choss.

FA: Toc Foale, Richard Wainwright, 1/10/00.

And another old route at the L end.

Scroffula (4, 30m)

Continue round buttress to L and where it runs back into hillside. About half way up the side is a wide mossy ledge. From ledge go directly up small sentry box then turn final headwall by a couple of moves to R.

FA: John Watson, Robert Juniper, Easter Monday 1974.

BARNETT PEAK CLIMBING TOPO

