Walk:
Wollemi National Park: Wollangambe-Colo Junction and Around

Leader:
Yuri Bolotin

Maps, etc:
Colo Heights. GPS setting WGS84.

Description:
Day 1. From the end of Drip Rock Trail, make our way to Clews Cave and then down to the Colo River at GR 758 080. Walk downstream to the Wollangambe River junction and set up camp.
Day 2. Day-packs only. The intent is to walk up the Wollangambe and climb a spur at GR 743 065 towards spot height 416 m, then explore westwards along the ridge and under the cliffs till around GR 716 068; from there, to descend into a tributary of the Wollangambe and follow it to the camp. However, the day's proceedings will be determined by the weather.
Day 3. Strike the camp and walk along the Colo till GR 767 057. Climb a tributary going north west, then north east, and make our way to the Drip Rock Trail.
Mostly exploratory. Scrambling and exposure. About 25 km.

Rating:
6M. M333E

Gear Issues:
Full pack gear, in addition to day-walk gear.

Date walked:
20-22 February 2026.

The Party:
Yuri Bolotin (leader), Paula Kelly, Anna Ossig-Bonanno, Ross Jamison, Ivan Littlewood, Anton Leddin, Karen Iorns, Kevin Songberg, Rodney Nelson, Stephen Allen.

The Weather:
Day 1 – A warm day with full cloud cover in the morning, gradually diminishing during the day, then coming back in the afternoon. Little or no wind. High humidity. Thunderstorms and rain between 9 pm and midnight. Temperature range 20 to 28 degrees C.
Day 2 –A hot, humid, mostly fine day. Occasional light breezes. Strong gusts in late afternoon. Thunderstorms and drizzle between 5 pm and 8 pm. Temperature range 21 to 32 degrees C.
Day 3 – A cloudy morning followed by a very hot, humid, mostly fine day. Uncomfortable walking conditions. Temperature range 22 to 33 degrees C.

Track Notes

Note: time references in the text relate to Grid References in the table at the end of these Track Notes.

Day 1 – 20 February 2026

Light, steady rain that had fallen overnight was responsible for the bush being soaking wet and the general conditions, rather mild for this time of the year. What a contrast to the weather we were going to experience at the end of our walk two days' later! But I am jumping ahead of myself!

Our adventure began at 0955 as we walked along Drip Rock Trail for a short distance until, ten minutes later, the end of the made road was reached. The old logging trails map provided by Bernard Lo shows a continuation going for several kilometres all the way to Parr West above the Colo, as well as to our immediate destination, Clews Cave and beyond, but these tracks have long been overgrown, so we could not take advantage of a single short clear stretch.

Instead, as soon as the road was behind us, the party plunged into a sea of scrub. The density here was only moderate and would have been easy enough to handle if it was not for the abundant moisture from the overnight rain. In no time, our gear became completely saturated. It felt worse than if the rain was falling on us because we were wet from inside and outside. I would still call it bearable due to the mild air temperature.

By 1047, we attained the top of a prominent knoll, where a sharp turn was made to the south west, in order to follow a long spur leading towards Clews Cave. The next hour or so was fairly uneventful, so I did not record much, but at 1145, the ridge changed its character and the steep ascent to Clews Cave began.

Having quickly made our way through a series of small cliffs, we stopped at a bigger drop for a minute or two that it took to find a way down. The air had cleared somewhat by then, so we could enjoy the views of Island Mountain, about one kilometre away, seen at an angle I had not been used to. Despite us spending the rest of the trip walking virtually around it, this prominent peak would remain invisible from now on due to our position being so close to it that we could only see the bottom cliffs. At 1226, the party entered Clews Cave, in time for a lunch break.


Island Mountain from the descent towards Clews Cave. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

The cave, shown on the current 1:25,000 topographic map, is named after Lt. Col. Hugh Powell Gough Clews (1890-1980), known as “The Major”. Whilst surveying this area in the early 1930’s, he and his party stayed in the cave. In his book, The *Bad Bit Across The River*, Clews writes,

So we had a very uncomfortable night [as it rained], *and early next morning moved into a cave under the saddle. And it rained all that day and next night, clearing up early the day after. As soon as we were sure that the rain had ceased we went down into the* [Colo] *river.*

This was my second visit, and I once again found the place rather underwhelming, despite its pedigree. It only measures about 10 metres in length and 5 metres in height, and there is virtually no flat floor. The only level spot had the remains of a campfire and would only be big enough to sleep 1-2 people. Clews' party must have spent a miserable day and the following night huddled in this small space by sitting upright on the uneven floor and leaning against the crumbling walls. The sandstone rocks forming the cave looked unstable and might have crashed down since Clews stayed here almost 100 years ago, so there is a good chance it might have had bigger floor area and the entire setting could been more comfortable than it appears now.

Clews also mentions another cave in his book (encountered during a different trip),

First night got to a point overlooking the river and camped in a cave. Afterwards, we always referred to this as the "flour" cave. The sandy floor was extremely fine sand, which was impossible to get out of our blankets and great care had to be taken to keep it out of the tucker.

I think it is not likely to be "Clews Cave" as there no views of the river either from the overhang we were currently at or from the escarpment above; and I did not find the floor too powdery (although that may have changed with time).

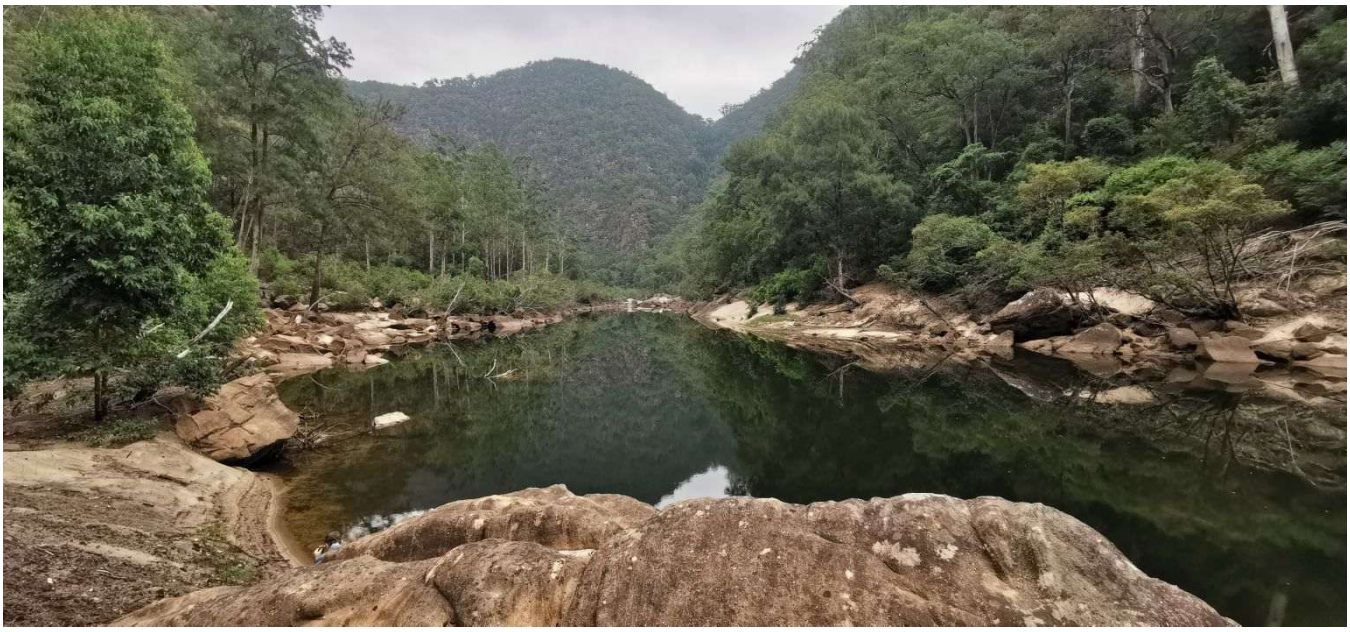
The party in Clews Cave. Photo: Kevin Songberg.

In any case, for our party, 20 minutes in this place felt more than enough. To the west of us, was a low spur we needed to ascend before coming down to the Colo. There are two knolls crowning it, spaced about 600 m apart. When preparing for the trip, I always print a large-scale map for every day, in addition to a small-scale overall map. This time, I had expected the first day to be so easy that I did not bother to produce the detailed map for it. I had my mobile phone map with me, but the screen could only show a limited area, and on this occasion, I led the party up towards the wrong saddle, to the north of the first knoll, whereas it had to be the one on the southern side of it. I realised my error as soon as we climbed to the top of the spur. It was no big drama to then head south around the knoll, and we only had to do an extra 300-400 m of easy walking, but I felt annoyed by my laziness and touch of arrogance. I should have known better there is no place for these in the Wollemi.

By 1312, we reached the top of the descent, noting a dry overhang, only big enough for a couple of people to camp under, but nevertheless better-looking than Clews Cave. Our way to the Colo was via Bucks Pass 24,

also known as Clews Shortcut[1]. The way down was very steep, slippery, wet but manageable and included a reasonably-sized cliff line. Twenty-one minutes later, the party made it to the bottom of the gully. A short distance further downstream, we successfully bypassed a significant dry waterfall by scrambling down on the left of it. The party then had to sidle about 10 metres above and around a canyon-looking section of the creek, before moving back down to the bottom. A pack-passing exercise was required to negotiate another waterfall, at 1414.

Overall, it was not a difficult trip, and at 1430, we were down at the Colo, on the side of a long tranquil pool, just as a big fish (at least one foot long) jumped out of the water to greet our arrival. As the party started to move downstream, I soon recorded a small dry cave a few metres above the river with flat floors to sleep two people. At 1448. The gorge was very picturesque and we had no problem walking just on the water's edge until the 90-degree bend a few hundred metres further along where the bluffs came very close to the river, leaving us the narrowest strip, 10-30 cm wide, to balance on without getting wet. This ledge will be underwater when the river is up, but I knew all of this was academic as a few crossings awaited us and we would be getting wet soon enough. After the river bend was rounded, its character underwent a complete change, from a languid pool to noisy, fast-flowing rapids. Our pace slowed down due to the abundant big boulders that needed to be clambered around.



The Colo near our descent. Photo: Stephen Allen.

[1] *Colo River Passes and Routes* by Brian Corlis.

The Colo near our descent. Photo: Kevin Songberg.

Only a very narrow ledge to keep ourselves dry. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Approaching the Wollangambe junction. Photo: Paula Kelly.

By 1550, we arrived at the spot where the Wollangambe River entered the Colo on the opposite side. There was a question on my mind of where the best camping spot would be. As part of the party had already made it across, I thought we might as well join them. This needed a short retrace to a spot where we could cross to the other side of the Colo (getting knee-high wet in the process), then walking a short distance where we were able to wade across the boisterously flowing Wollangambe at its very mouth (this required a waist-high submersion). Luckily, the water in both rivers was pleasantly warm.

Wollangambe entering the Colo from the right side. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

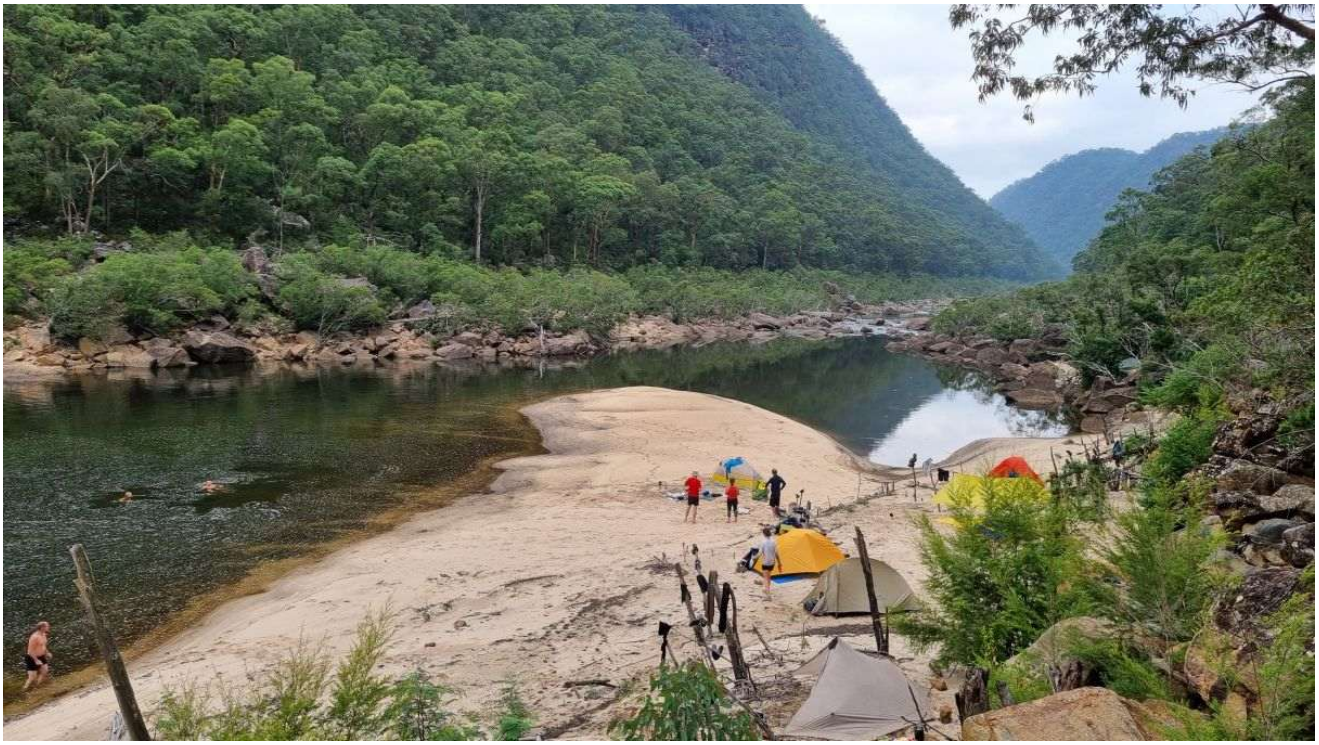
Crossing the Colo. Photo: Stephen Allen.


Crossing the Wollangambe at its mouth. Photo: Kevin Songberg.

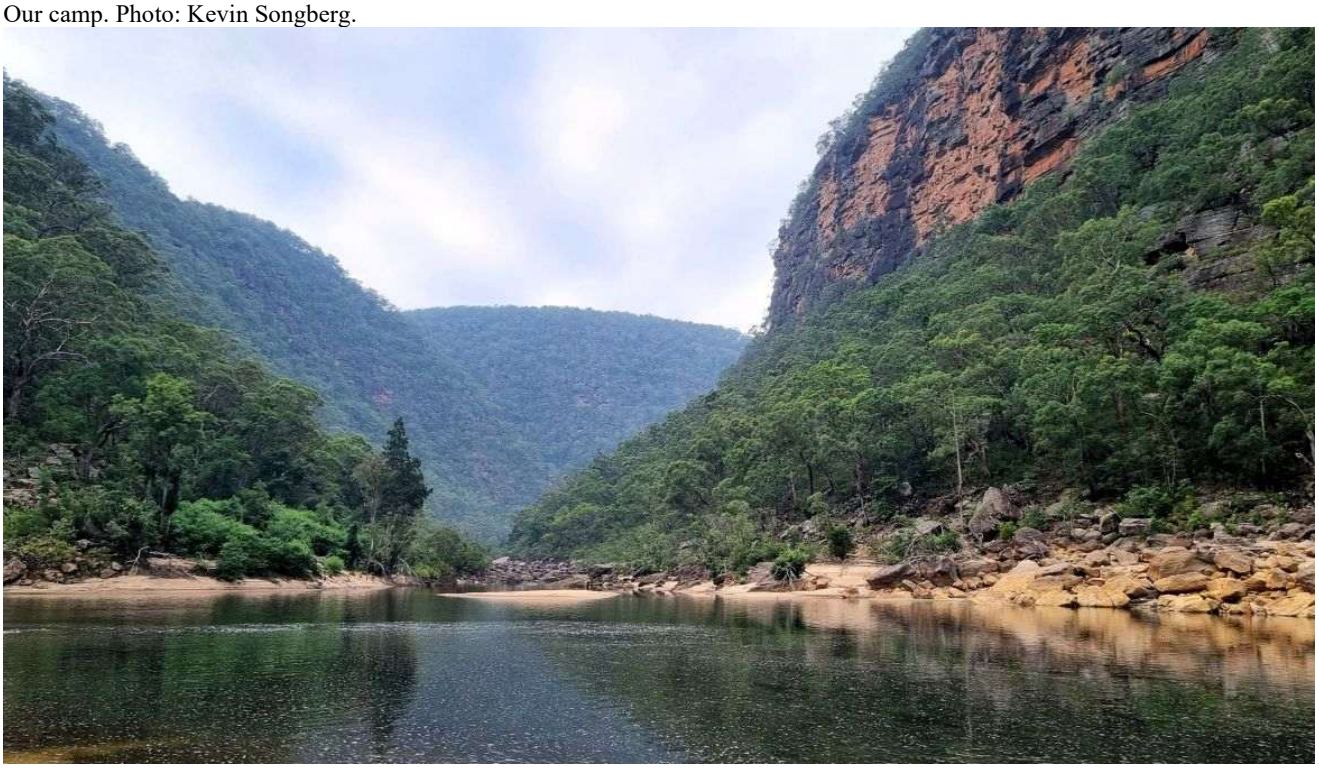
Finally, at 1649, we were all together at the “Gambe Beach”, a long stretch of sand at the Colo-Wollangambe junction, our home for the next two nights. Rodney and I had been here in April 2022 during a day-walk from high camp on top of the long ridge to the south that begins at Bowen Hill near Bilpin. It had been a totally different experience as we could only afford about an hour to linger at this location before having to head back up.

As we now intended to stay here much longer, some time needed to be spent setting up camp sites. Thunderstorms were forecast for tonight and tomorrow. As I do not own a tent and rely on a fly, I struggled erecting anything reliably stable, let alone remotely comfortable, for almost an hour. The team were all ready for the ‘happy hour’ of shared snacks by the river as I was still struggling arranging my accommodation. Finally, Stephen and Anna took pity of me and told me to go for a swim whilst they moved my fly to a much better and safer location.

The swim felt absolutely heavenly, and when I stepped out of the water, my new abode was ready, waiting for me. Thank you, guys! That’s what friends are for! As the team relaxed and watched the sun going down, I thought our camp location was perfect and, whilst I cannot say I have camped everywhere along the Colo, I did spent nights in many places along it, and this spot at the junction of two great rivers, with a long sandy beach and enormous cliffs soaring into the sky, has to be the most picturesque Colo camp I have stayed at.



Our camp. Photo: Kevin Songberg.



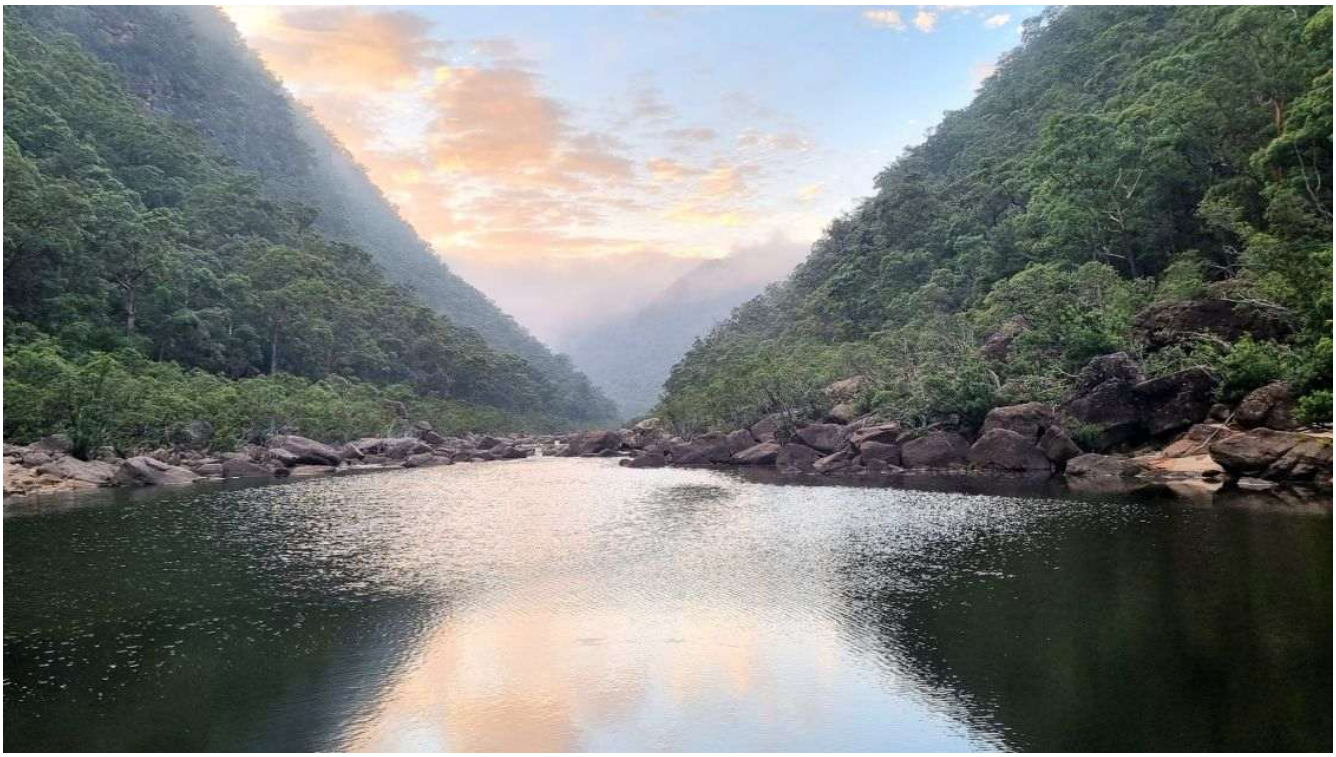
The view upstream from the camp towards Wollangambe junction (on the left). Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Day statistics: total distance 9.13 km; total ascent 169 m.

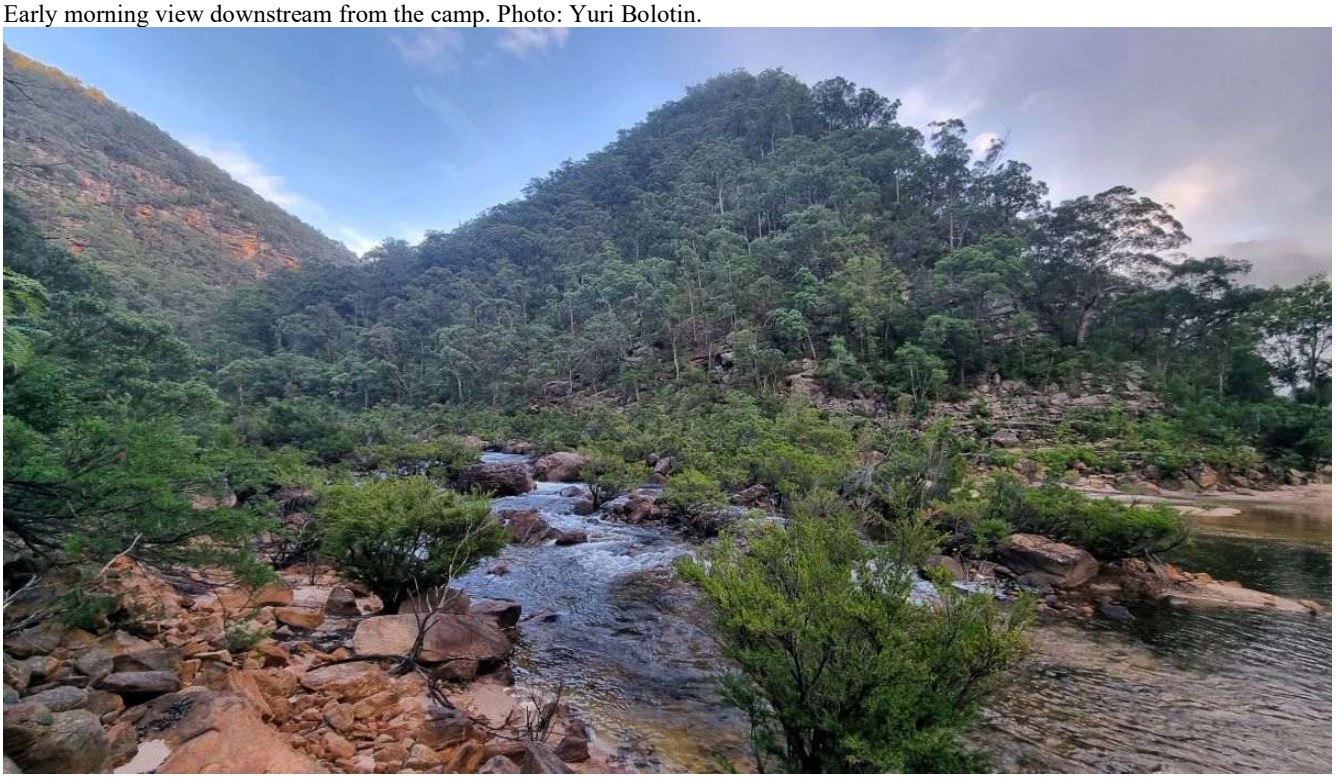
Day 2 – 21 February 2026

Due to the weather, it had to be an early wake-up call. After an overnight thunderstorm and some rain, we woke up to a warm, humid, cloudy, muggy morning. The temperatures during the day were expected to climb above 30 degrees C, so we could have been forgiven for just spending the entire day in this strikingly beautiful spot, swimming and taking it easy. Instead, most of the group decided to join me on an exploratory walk that promised to be hard.

During the last hour before the departure, we witnessed an amazing spectacle of light and colour over the water and skies surrounding the camp. By the time we set off at 0702, the cloud cover had almost entirely lifted.



Early morning view downstream from the camp. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Wollangambe mouth near the camp was the start of our walk today. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

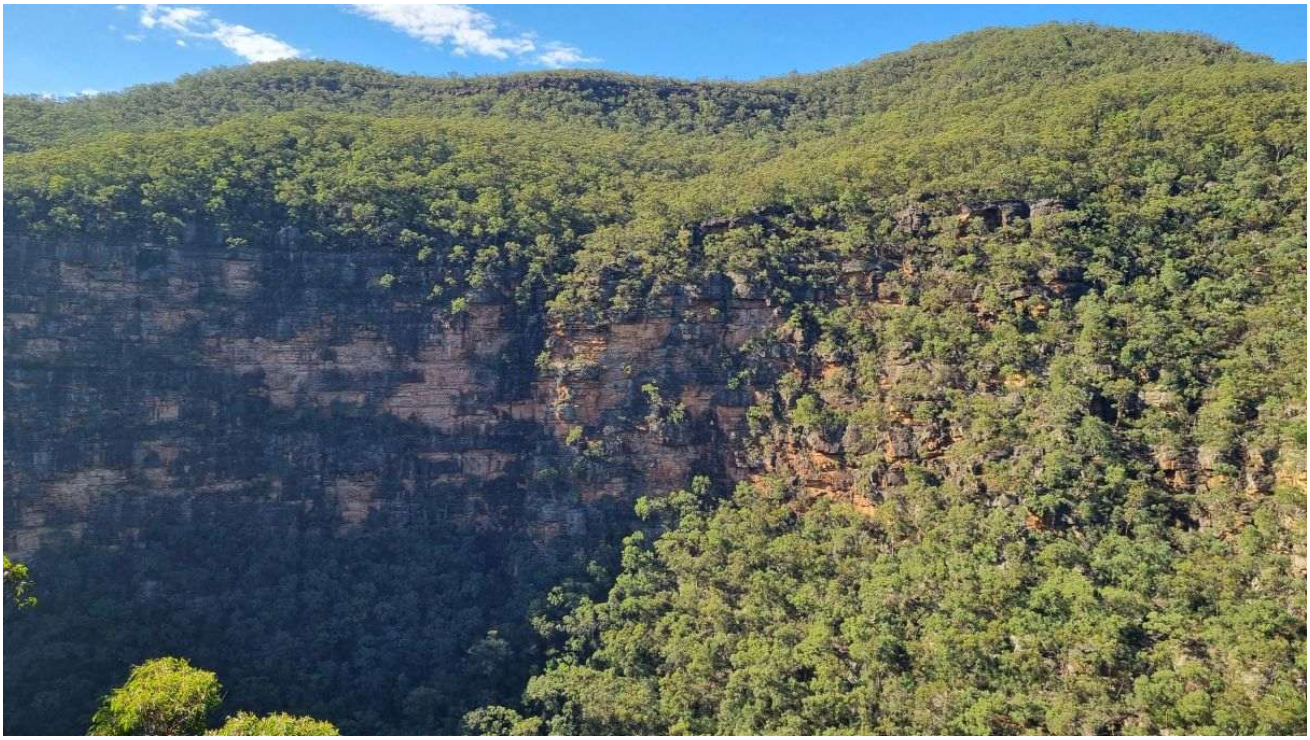
Keeping on the camp side of the Wollangambe River, our party proceeded upstream through an extensive boulder field covering the bank. The progress was very slow due to the size of the piled-up rocks and slimy, wet surfaces. The colours of the stone here were mostly brown, different to the greys we had encountered along the Colo yesterday. High above our heads, we saw some alluring-looking caves, but I was reluctant to take extra time for side trips during these early stages of the journey.

At 0804, the party approached the spur we intended to take up to the tops. The only issue, we had to be on the opposite side to commence the climb. Ever since we left the camp, Wollangambe was nothing but a long series of fast bouldery rapids. At this spot, it has split into multiple channels, some positioned vertically higher than others due to big boulders dividing the river. The crossing was an exhilarating experience, also due to the incredible overall setting, an amphitheatre of 200 metre plus high vertical walls enclosing an almost 120-degree river bend.

Yuri crossing the Wollangambe, with amphitheatre walls behind him. Photo: Anton Leddin.

Fifteen minutes elapsed before everyone had safely crossed to the other side and we could commence the ascent. All clouds of the early morning had by now been burnt off by the strong sun that shone fiercely straight into our faces as we climbed the very steep north-west trending spur towards the tops.

It was very slow going involving a few scrambles, so when we spotted an open platform on the edge of the cliffs, we grabbed an opportunity to have a rest, photography session, and morning tea, all at the same time. At 0908. The Wollangambe River was now almost 150 metres of what looked like a straight vertical drop below us; across it, we were gazing at the amazing amphitheatre walls we had admired from the bottom. Towards the south, there was the long ridge where we had camped in April 2022, and to the north west, we could see the tops we intended to get to during today. All this, while having a drink and a snack. An occasional little breeze, a rare occurrence today, felt extremely welcome.



Looking to the amphitheatre cliffs on the side of Wollangambe. Photo: Kevin Songberg.

The view towards the tops to the north west. Photo: Anton Leddin.

At 0926, it was time to shoulder the packs and continue our climb on this knife-edge-like spur. Numerous scrambles made it more interesting, but the appearance of abundant Devils Twine, *Cassytha pubescens*, was not what we needed and demanded more effort from every metre of the elevation gained.

Finally, at 1005, I was able to record that we reached an area of gentler gradient and less ferocious scrub. Rather than climbing all the way to the top of the nearest knoll (spot height 416 m), which would unlikely have any views due to dense vegetation, I thought we should sidle to the edge of a cliff line to the north, which was reached by 1040.

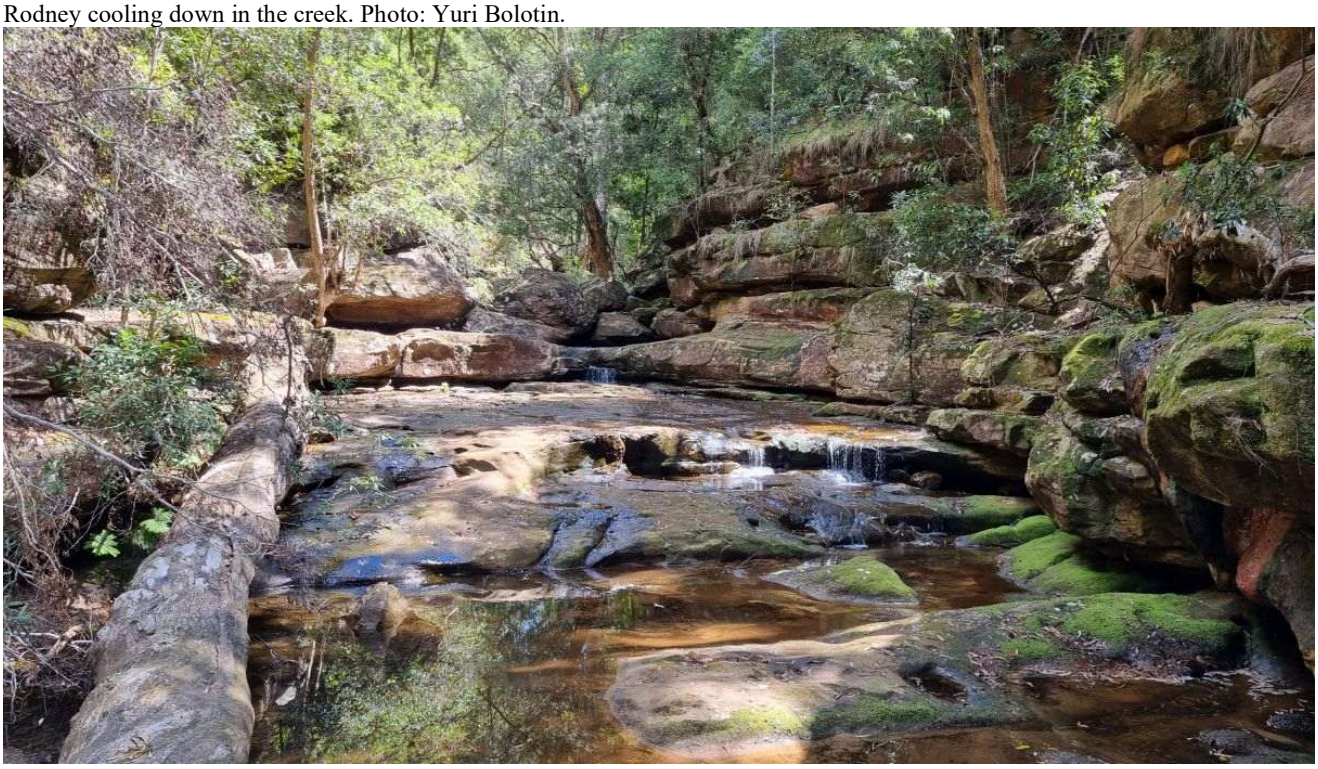
It felt very hot whilst traversing below this north-facing escarpment; besides, we were not seeing much of interest, so, after a short while, the decision was made to climb back to the top of the ridge. We were there, surrounded by thick scrub, by 1115. Bearing in mind the still rising temperatures, humidity, and the tiredness of the group, I thought I should shelve the plans to follow this ridge westwards for another kilometre or so, to the point where we had walked along it during the Complete Wollemi North-South Traverse before descending into the Wollangambe River on our way towards Bilpin.

Instead, the group continued along the ridge only for seventeen more minutes, before beginning our descent into a large unnamed tributary of Wollangambe River to the north. My regular readers will not be surprised to hear about one of my usual bugbears – the discrepancy between the 1:25,000 topographic map and the conditions on the ground. The former indicates that we would be walking down to the bottom of the gorge without any hindrances. In reality, this 240 m descent was one of the most complex ones I remember as we needed to constantly weave around and scramble through half a dozen consecutive significant cliff lines. Having the relentlessly hot sun in our faces made our efforts even harder. Rodney was with me at the front, and his physical agility and ability to read the landscape were of enormous help. Also, having the detailed Lidar map enabled us to pick better directions in this wild and challenging landscape. Towards the second half of this rollercoaster journey, at 1224, we stopped to photograph a beautiful 15 metre long overhang with sloped floors and ornately decorated multi-colour roof. It was also an excuse to spend a minute or two in the shade.

The multi-coloured overhang. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

It felt like a very long time but was only just over an hour and a quarter before, hot, thirsty, sweaty, hungry and bothered, we emerged at the bottom of the ravine in what I can only describe as paradise – a gently gurgling brook full of the tastiest ever water, spilling through extensive rock platforms and surrounded by towering cliffs and big trees giving cool shade. A very-well deserved stop for lunch and rest. For some time, we just lazed about by the creek, drinking, splashing cool liquid onto our overheated heads and bodies. Then it was time to have a little food and explore around. I went about 50 m upstream, noting a dry cave with flat floors, enough to sleep a couple of people. The extraordinary long time (for my trips) spent at this stop was completely worth it. From 1249 till 1342.

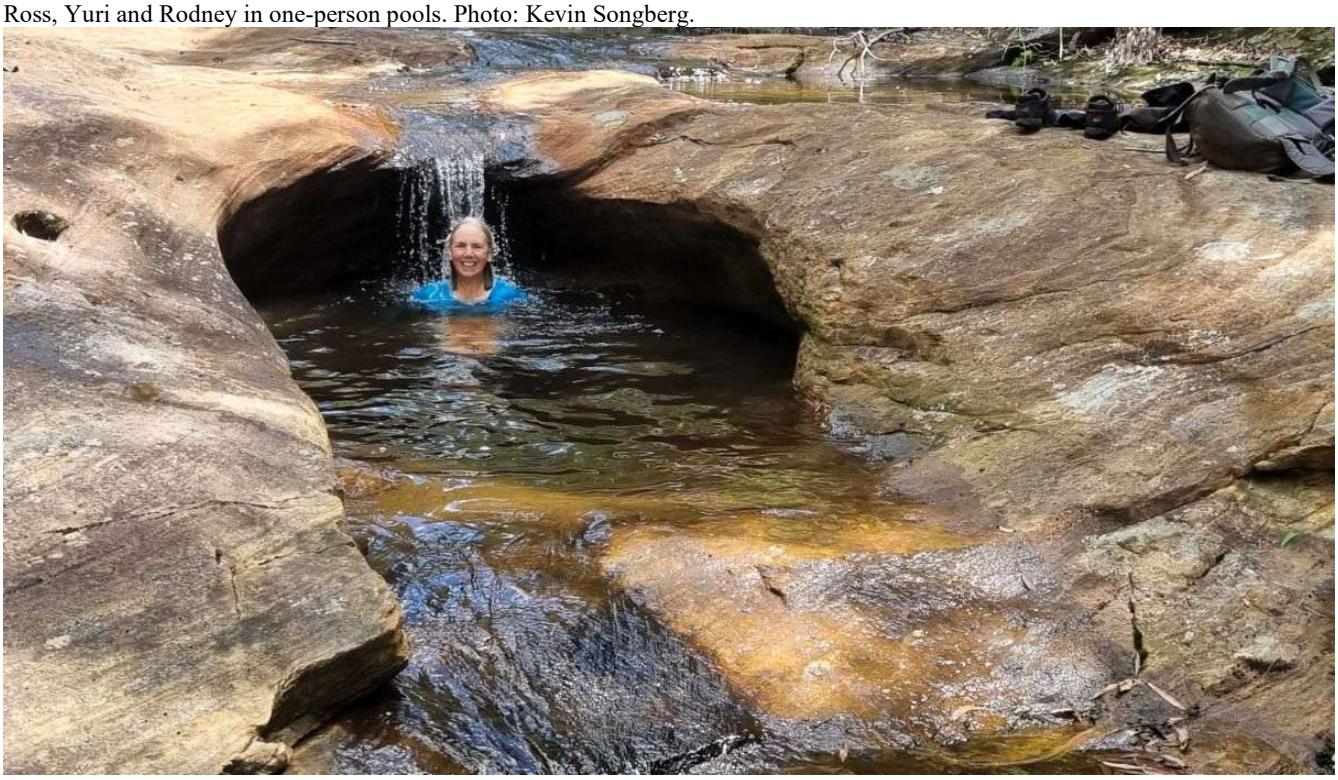
Rodney cooling down in the creek. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Rock platforms along the creek bed. Photo: Kevin Songberg.

Rejuvenated, the party headed downstream along the delightful sandstone terraces covering the creek bed. We only progressed two hundred metres before encountering an area dotted with a number of one person or two person pools; one or two, also had water cascades. Because the creek at the lunch spot had been shallow, we missed out on a swim. Time to make up for it now! From 1358 till 1411.

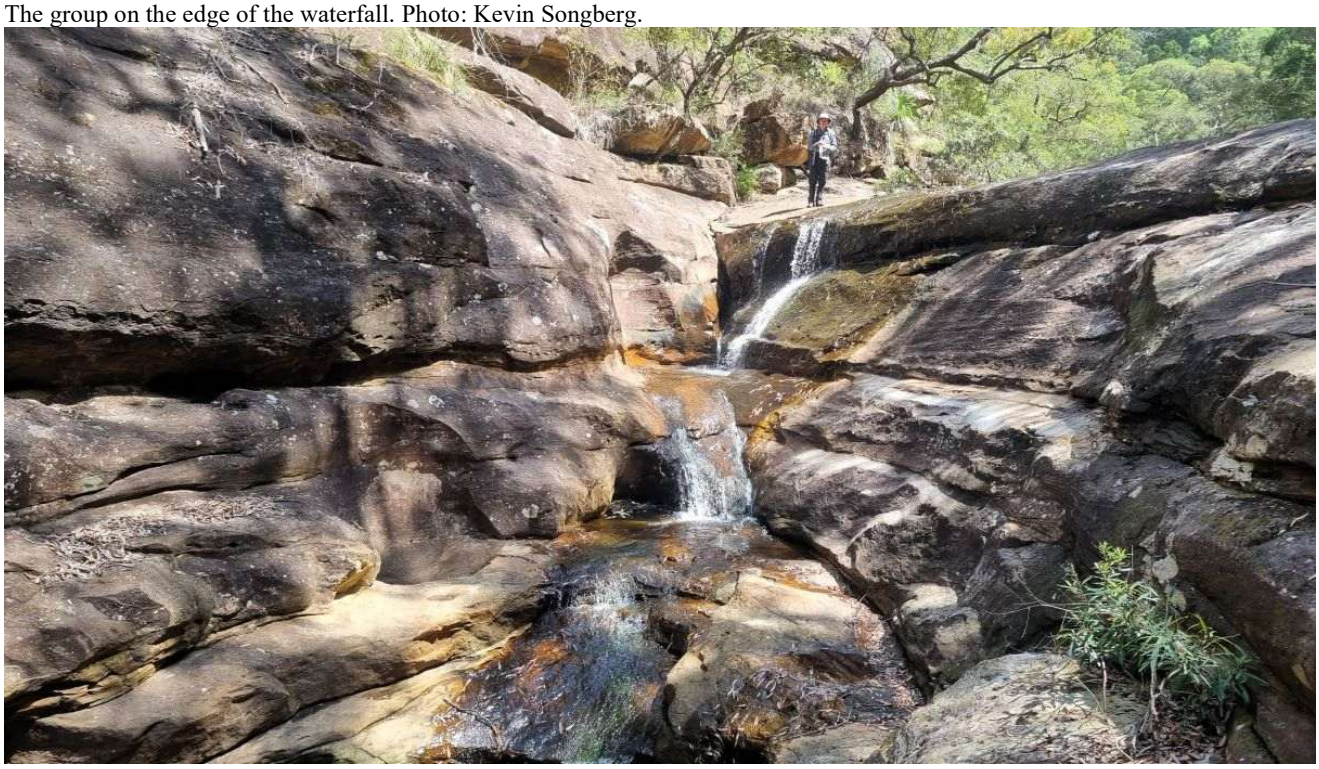
Ross, Yuri and Rodney in one-person pools. Photo: Kevin Songberg.



Paula's pool came complete with a small waterfall. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Straight after enjoying these most refreshing individual baths, the group paused on the edge of a picturesque five metre waterfall. It was easily negotiated on the left-hand side. For the next hundred metres or so, the creek bed became bouldery and dry, but, sure enough, the water was flowing again soon enough.

The group on the edge of the waterfall. Photo: Kevin Songberg.



Kevin on the edge of the waterfall. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

We were delighted with the amazing turn of our fortunes this afternoon, but this ravine still held many surprises in store for us. No sooner we descended below the waterfall that a 25 metre long cave of beautifully eroded sandstone presented itself. As we moved further along it, we realised there was a continuation around the corner, also about 25 metres long. The top part of the wall had black and white decorations, but it was the bottom part stretching along a tunnel that completely blew our minds with its extraordinary colours resembling a painter's palette – thick splashes of brown, yellow, orange, blue-grey, and green (the last was the colour of Lichen covering the wet walls); to add to that splendour, there were rows of multi-coloured stalactites. Unbelievable! From 1414 till 1429.

Cave detail. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Rodney in the multi-coloured cave. Photo: Paula Kelly.

Cave detail. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Stalactites in the cave. Photo: Paula Kelly.

Cave detail. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Next, in complete contrast to the previous section, we entered a field of giant boulders. Our pace slowed down, whilst we were clambering over (and sometimes, under) them. After about 200 metres of this obstacle course, the party reached another long flat platform and found, at the end of it, a magnificent blue-green oval-shaped pool, complete with a natural spa at one end. There was even a special stone seat to rest under the spa. That meant one more unplanned but very enjoyable stop. From 1457 till 1507.

The group in the pool. Photo: Kevin Songberg.

Afterwards, we continued via more rock shelves, now dropping down vigorously, creating numerous small cascades and waterfalls. Another boulder field was encountered and negotiated in this section. We also saw

a couple of caves just above the creek that may be suitable for staying in. At 1530, the party stopped to record a 40 metre long overhang with flat floors, a great shelter for 5-6 people. In the last ten metres or so, the walls were decorated with wide brown and green stripes; at the far end, I photographed a small but exquisite cupola.

Stone platforms continued most of the way to the Wollangambe junction, reached by 1554. Our journey down this creek had been full of joy and surprises. Looking at the topographic map, we only explored a small part of this significant 12 kilometre long waterway that originates at Mount Mistake. I would like to call this geographical feature Surprise Creek. Plans are already in place for another trip to investigate it further upstream.

The party now walked a short distance along the Wollangambe, crossing it at the Colo junction, at the same spot we had done yesterday, and arriving at the camp by 1623. Here, we heard Anna's and Karen's report about very strong wind gusts that came and went during the day. Several of our tents and flies (including mine) had to be rescued and re-installed, otherwise they could have ended up in the Colo. Thank you, ladies, for doing that.

An evening swim near the camp. Photo: Paula Kelly.

Day statistics: total distance 6.85 km; total ascent 550 m.

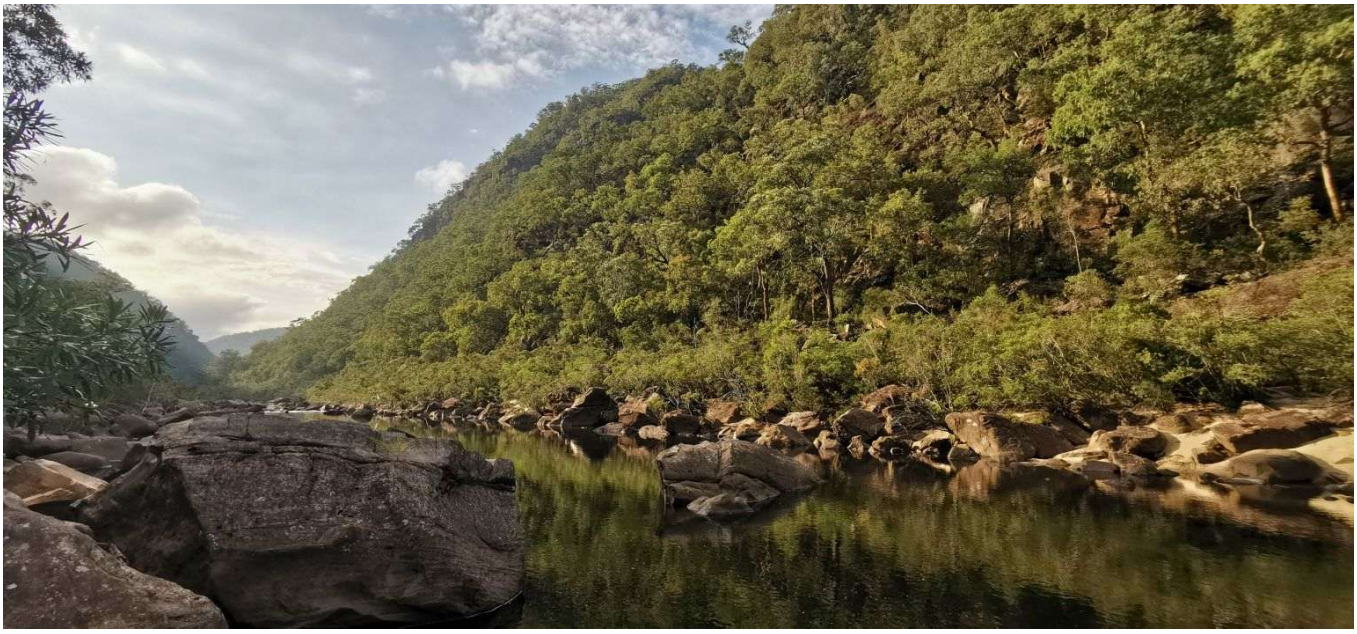
Day 3 – 22 February 2026

During the previous evening, while going through the details of today, I had reminded the team about the predicted even hotter weather conditions, as well as carrying full packs and a 'small' matter of a 450 m plus climb back to the cars. With all that in mind, I wanted to depart at the first light, whilst the day was still cool enough. There had been no cries of joy at that announcement, but alarms were duly set for waking up in the dark, and by 0631 we said goodbye to our stunning campsite and headed downstream along the Colo River.

A panoramic view of our campsite. Photo: Anton Leddin.

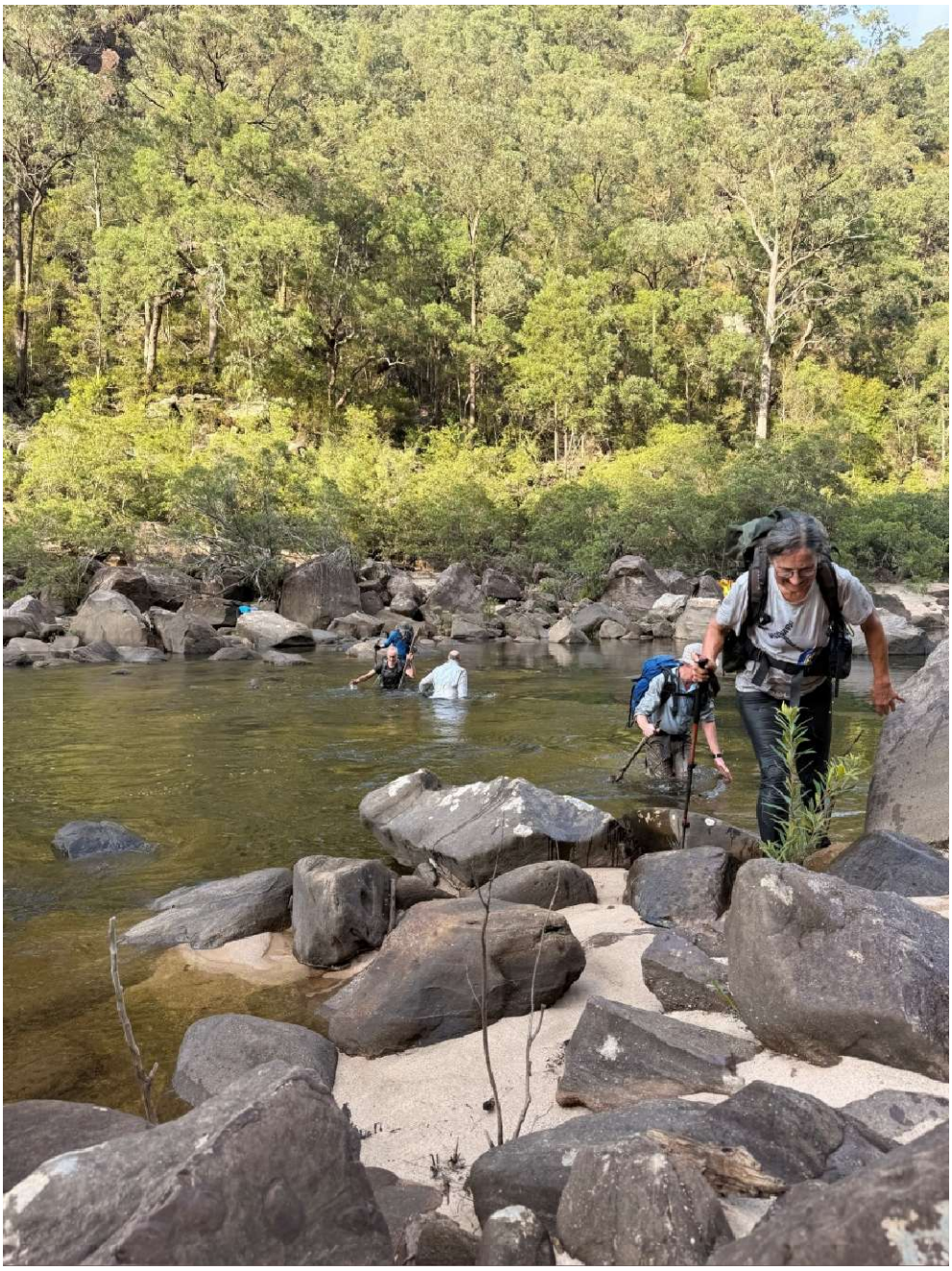
The part saying goodbye to this amazing location. L to R, Anna Ossig-Bonanno, Karen Iorns, Keving Songberg, Yuri Bolotin, Anton Leddin, Ross Jamison, Paula Kelly, Ivan Littlewood, Rodney Nelson and Stephen Allen. Photo: Anton Leddin (self-timer).

Apart from occasional stretches of sand, it was slow going on the bank covered by a combination of boulders and scrub dominated by medium sized Water Gums, *Tristaniopsis laurina*. Still, the weather conditions were mild enough. The sun had not fully appeared yet from behind the clouds, and the river, with pink light of the morning reflecting in the deep tranquil pools, looked beautiful. Huge walls of sandstone rose from the green forest floor on both sides, but especially to our left, as they formed the western flank of Island Mountain. Interestingly, along the way we picked up a few pieces of black shale in the river bed. Had they come all the way from Newnes? Very likely.



Colo River, early morning light. Photo: Stephen Allen.

On our minds, was a constant question of the Colo crossing that would have to be done somewhere within about 2.2 kilometres separating our camp and the exit gully. For the first half of the trip, the river was a continuous deep pool, but then it entered small rapids and we started to see some opportunities to get to the opposite side. Somehow, we kept hoping for a dry-ish crossing, but as there was nothing suitable, with only 700 m or so left to go, we picked a ‘good enough’ spot and did it, with the degree of submersion from waist to chest high. The water was warm, and, having a long journey ahead of us, we knew we would soon dry out. From 0810 till 0820.



Crossing the Colo. Photo: Karen Iorns.

By 0855, as the sun, having burnt most of the morning cloud away, was making its presence felt more and more, the party reached our exit gully. The first part of it is known as Bucks Pass 29, Cascade Pass[2]. I had done it during the day-trip to Clews Cave and Island Mountain in April 2021. The route stipulates leaving the gully after the first major junction about 600 m upstream and following the ridges all the way back, but I had a different plan in mind for today. Because of the hot and humid weather, as well my usual desire to explore new territories, I wanted to try and stay at the bottom of the ravine, hopefully, in the shade, for as long as possible, maybe even all the way to its headwaters. This would of course depend on many factors, including possible waterfalls, scrub, and availability of forest cover.

The creek was flowing well enough at the Colo junction, but, with a big climb ahead of us, we had a quick break to fill our water bottles, just in case, and at 0900, shouldered our packs and commenced the long

[2] *Colo River Passes and Routes* by Brian Corlis.

ascent to the tops through dark, wet and somehow gloomy-looking rainforest gorge. Mostly staying within the boulder-strewn creek bed, we only saw occasional pools of water along the way.

Having quickly negotiated the first waterfall, we next came to a much bigger one, about 20 metres high, coming down in a wide arc-shaped area through a series of narrow stone ledges. I remembered using them to clamber up with relative ease five years ago, because they were mostly dry, but today these cornices were wet and extremely slippery. Besides, today, we were carrying full packs.

Approaching the big waterfall. Photo: Anton Leddin.

We needed a tape at the top to ensure safety. Whilst Rodney went to investigate for a way around on the right side, I decided to try the ledges. For me, it was a very uncomfortable and sometimes scary journey, but I was eventually able to get to about the middle of the waterfall height, from where it was possible to traverse a short distance to the left and away from the seeping moisture, so the second part of the climb could be done with less risk. Coming out onto the top platform, I saw Rodney descending there from the other side. He reported a very steep and challenging but doable for him slope. I asked the guys at the bottom to have a look at it, and they did not think it was very doable for the rest of the group.

But now, with two of us at the top, we had another option. A solid tree stood just below the top platform, providing an excellent anchor point for the first tape that covered about 12 metres of the drop height. In addition to that, Kevin, who supervised the group climb from the bottom, secured another tape on a ledge for the remaining 4-5 metres. He staggered the two tapes a few metres apart for better safety. One by one, packs were hauled, first to the ledge and then to the top of the waterfall. All members of the party did the same, and eventually everyone was up, safe and sound. Directly across the top platform, another small scramble leading to the next level, had to be done. It was only about 2.5 m high but rather awkward. The entire waterfall ascent lasted from 0927 till 1012, a considerable time, but I make no excuses for taking all necessary measures and time to ensure an accident-free trip.

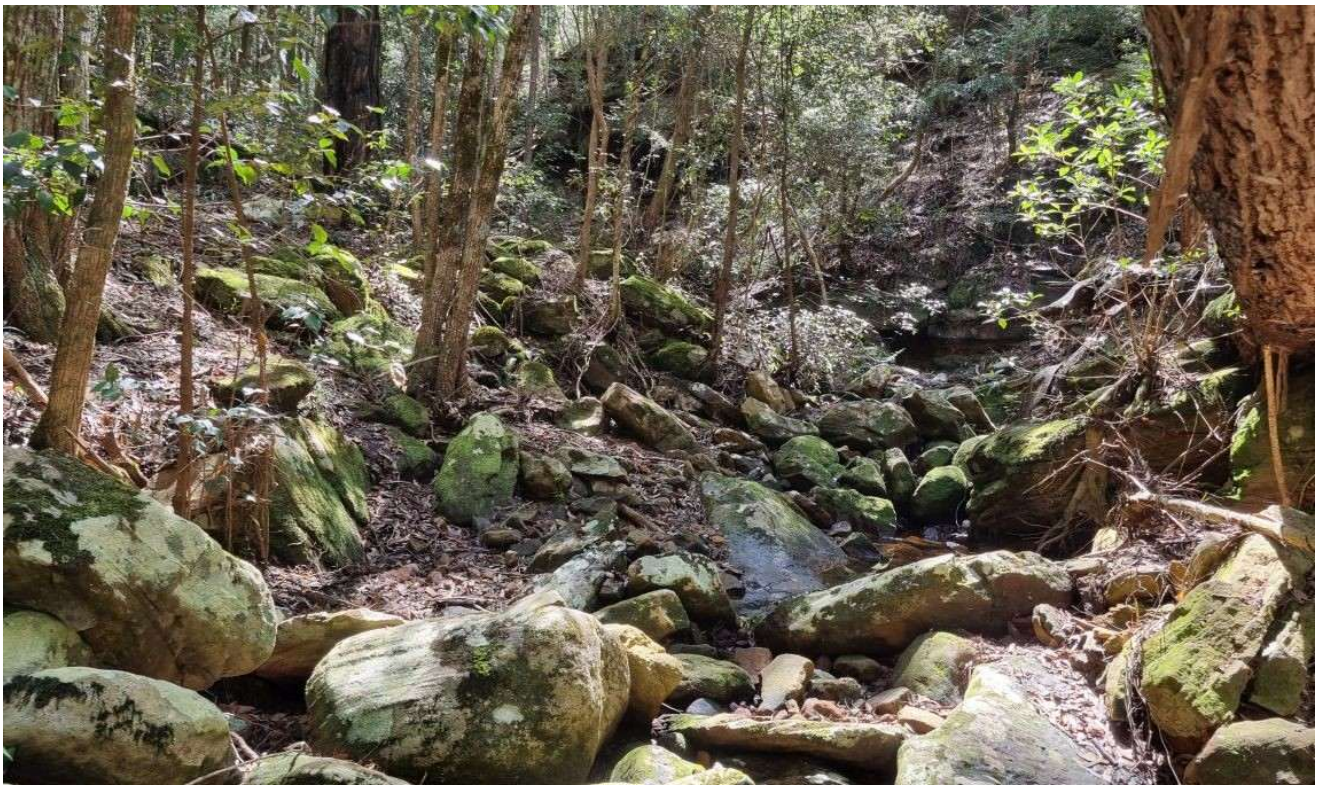

Two tapes-assisted waterfall ascent. Photo: Kevin Songberg.

As we were getting ready to continue, I heard calls (perfectly justified) for morning tea, but I wanted to first negotiate the next waterfall I knew was located immediately upstream. We did that without any problems using a ramp on the left-hand side, then coming back down to the rocky creek bed that had a good-sized pool of flowing water. Morning tea could then commence immediately! At 1036. Whilst the group was having a rest, I asked Rodney to climb around the next obstacle, a low cliff line, to check the water situation upstream, at the junction of two creeks. He reported it was ‘dry as…’, so we had to top up our supplies here.

At 1050, it was time to move on. A short scramble on the left-hand side brought us five minutes later above the cliff line and to a Y-junction. The left, longer branch led to Clews Cave; this was the gully the group had crossed on the first day. We took the right branch, which commenced with a big boulder pile up and waterfall. Once above, it looked very agreeable, just as I had hoped – shady, and with little or no scrub. Soon, to top it all off, pools of clear running water appeared on our way.

Negotiating the boulders at the start of the gully. Photo: Kevin Songberg.

In the Wollemi, I do not take anything for granted, so I treated every step forward and up in this wonderful ravine as a special gift but was ready for the conditions to change very suddenly. At 1115, just before another Y-junction, we recorded a dry cave with flat floors, good enough to sleep a couple of people. We had to take the left-hand gorge, and I was glad to see that the cool, shady rainforest with running water continued there. The bouldery creek bed would probably have been not that difficult to get along, but the party mostly stayed on the slopes slightly above it, where the progress was even faster.



The shady gully. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

We were steadily gaining altitude, soon noting another junction. Still, no change to the character of the ravine. At 1151. Every time we passed a significant confluent watercourse, I was prepared for the stream to dry out, but this was not happening. After the next tributary, we saw some caves 20-30 m above creek bed. On one occasion, I went up to investigate. As soon as I left the shade of the forest, I was brutally assaulted by the blasting sun and humidity. I quickly went back down, having lost all my desire for more side trips.

The gully continues. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

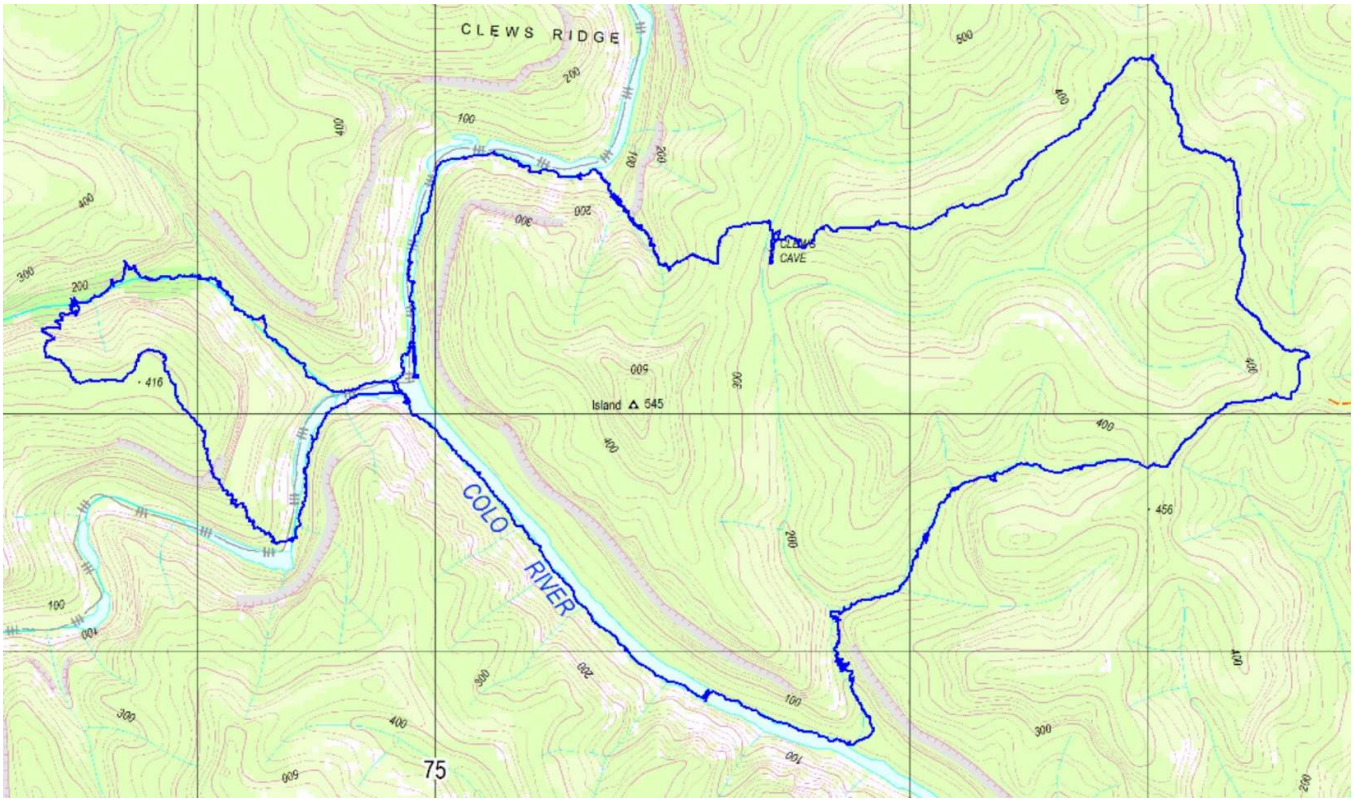
Between 1223 and 1243, we had lunch in a cool spot by the gurgling brook underneath a low overhang. Straight after that, a 40 metre long cave with lots of flat areas and ornate walls was recorded. At 1246.

1306 saw us on top of the spur, about 700 m away from the road. This gully proved to be an absolute life-saver in today's hot conditions and would be my preferred route on any other day. Recognising the name of the pass below, I would like to call it Cascade Gully.

The trip along the ridge was hellishly hot, and I felt so grateful we only needed to walk a small section of it, as opposed to 3.5 km plus if we had been following the ridges above. I truly believe that by exploring this gully we saved ourselves from having a number of heat strokes. One group member had a mild one whilst driving back. Luckily, there were passengers in the vehicle who took over. I drove home OK but felt out of sorts for the remainder of the evening.

We made it all to the walk start by 1348 to the cool drinks provided by Karen. This was liquid gold!

Day statistics: total distance 7.64 km; total ascent 520 m.
Trip statistics: total distance 23.62 km; total ascent 1,239 m.



Walk topographic map. Recorded by Anton Leddin (Day 1) and Yuri Bolotin (Days 2-3). Prepared by Yuri Bolotin.

Table of Times, Locations and Grid References

Time	Location	Grid Reference	Elevation
Day 1 – 20 February 2026			
0955	Started walking from Drip Rock Trail	GR 7868 0723	470 m
1005	End of made road	GR 7840 0770	440 m
1047	Top of the knoll	GR 7803 0852	485 m
1145	Start of steep ascent	GR 7678 0779	410 m
1226-1246	Clews Cave, lunch	GR 7642 0765	300 m
1312	Top of the decent towards the Colo	GR 7619 0764	355 m
1333	In gully	GR 7596 0764	240 m
1414	Waterfall	GR 7577 0790	120 m
1430	At the Colo	GR 7562 0801	55 m
1448	Small cave	GR 7537 0805	58 m
1550	The northern edge of Colo-Wollangambe junction	GR 7493 0715	51 m
1649	Camp at the southern edge of Colo-Wollangambe junction	GR 7490 0705	50 m
Day 2 – 21 February 2026			
0702	Left the camp	GR 7490 0705	50 m
0804-0819	Wollangambe crossing and start of the climb	GR 7442 0648	55 m
0908-0926	Lookout and morning tea	GR 7415 0663	175 m
1005	Start of gentler gradient	GR 7405 0685	350 m
1040	Escarpment edge	GR 7386 0725	390 m
1115	Top of the ridge	GR 7369 0714	410 m
1132	Start of the descent	GR 7351 0713	412 m

1224	Cave	GR 7343 0739	225 m
1249-1342	Surprise Creek, lunch	GR 7343 0739	165 m
1358-1411	Individual pools	GR 7364 0755	160 m
1414-1429	Multi-coloured overhang	GR 7373 0758	148 m
1457-1507	Big pool	GR 7409 0756	135 m
1530	Great camping cave	GR 7424 0739	100 m
1554	Wollangambe River junction	GR 7461 0710	52 m
1623	At camp	GR 7490 0705	50 m
Day 3 – 22 February 2026			
0631	Left the camp	GR 7490 0705	50 m
0810-0820	Colo crossing	GR 7615 0583	38 m
0855-0900	Cascade Gully and water replenishment	GR 7675 0562	35 m
0927-1012	Waterfall, tapes-assisted ascent	GR 7674 0592	115 m (bottom)
1036-1050	Morning tea and water replenishment	GR 7671 0614	155 m
1055	Y-junction of creeks	GR 7669 0617	160 m
1115	Cave	GR 7692 0624	200 m
1151	Tributary junction	GR 7720 0669	290 m
1223-1243	Lunch	GR 7773 0677	345 m
1306	End of Cascade Gully, top of the ridge	GR 7807 0678	430 m
1348	Walk start	GR 7868 0723	470 m