

Walk

Wollemi National Park: Around Natural Bridge Cascade

Leader

Yuri Bolotin. Co-leader Bernard Lo.

Maps

Kurrajong, Mountain Lagoon. GPS setting WGS84.

Walk Description and Route

Park at the corner of Coach House Road and Bells Line of Road. From here, make our way around a private property and up on a north, north east trending ridge until about GR 796 899. Turn north west and descend a series of ridges to underneath cliff lines south of Wheeny Creek at around GR 780 912. Traverse counterclockwise above Alsophylla Glen, all the way to the bottom of Natural Bridge Cascade. Next, walk south for a short distance until it is possible to climb above Natural Bridge Cascade. Exit up on the ridges and walk back to the cars. About 8 km. Mostly exploratory. Scrambling and exposure.

Rating

5M. S323E

Gear Recommendations

2 litres of water, GPS, PLB, appropriate head and footwear, electrolytes, maps, compass, first aid kit, tape (leader only). Change of gear for afterwards.

Date walked

21 June 2026.

The Party

Yuri Bolotin (leader), Bernard Lo (co-leader), Foojan Firoozi, Peter Hannam, Graham Groves, Peter Hatherly, Chris Dalton, 7.

The Weather

A glorious winter's day. Mostly sunny and no wind. Temperature range 7 to 16 degrees C, although it felt much warmer in the sun during the late morning and early afternoon.

Background Notes

On 29/11/25, I was in the party led by Bernard Lo that found 'the real' Natural Bridge Cascade in Alsophylla Glen. Both of these features had been described in an article published in *Australian Town and Country Journal* on 13 May 1871. You can read an extensive background story of this find in my track notes published after the walk.

On that day, however, we only saw Natural Bridge Cascade from the bottom. The distinctive arch at the top of the waterfall was just visible due to the distance and the angle of the sun. We had no time to climb closer to it, nor did we see any ways through the cliffs guarding it to do so. The main objective of today's walk was to visit this feature from both the bottom and the top. A new access route was going to be used in order to explore the surrounding country, both before and after visiting the Natural Bridge Cascade.

Track Notes

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

Cars were left on Coach House Road, Kurrajong Heights, and we began at 0805, first, gingerly stepping along a narrow shoulder of Bells Line of Road, and then, bypassing a private property to get into the national park. Along the way, a herd of feral deer was noted, for the second time at the same spot in a row, grazing on a meadow.

For a big part of this walk, we walked through recently backburnt areas – sometimes continuous and at other times, in small patches. Surprisingly, it was fairly slow going. Whilst the fire cleared a lot of the vegetation, it also hardened the remaining dry debris, making them scratchy and inflexible to push aside.

By 0844, the party reached a high point. It signified the start of a two kilometre long descent towards the cliffs above Wheeny Creek that we wanted to check out on our way towards Natural Bridge Cascade. After the first 250 m of gently sloping country, we came to the edge of a sharp drop. The views from here, down to Wheeny Creek gorge and beyond, would have been excellent, if it was not for the tree cover obstructing a big part. At 0858. Our descent from here was tricky, mainly due to the recent burn. It eliminated most of the vegetation, which would normally be used to provide extra support, and also created abundant loose rocks. Eleven minutes were spent getting to the bottom. Peter Hatherly, the geologist in the party, who wrote several papers about the area, explained that what we had just gone through was called ‘fault propagation fold’, and that it forms the western extent of the geological formation called Lapstone Structural Complex.



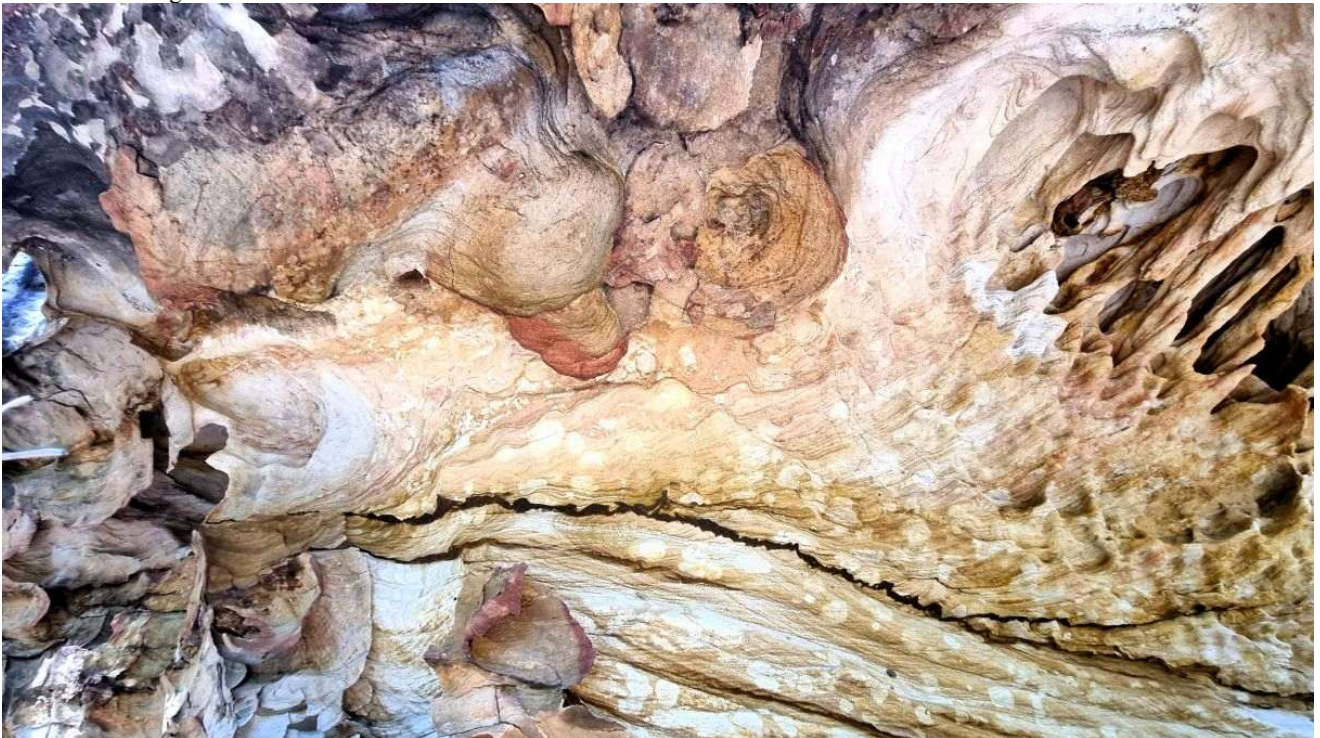
Peter explaining geology to Bernard and Foojan. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

From here, the ridge resumed its gradual decline. For the next 50 minutes, the group faithfully followed it through sections of burnt and unburnt bush, taking care not to stray off the planned course at a couple of junctions with side spurs. Between 0959 and 1014, we stopped for morning tea at a rocky outcrop.

Five minutes after resuming, it was time to leave this long ridge and head down underneath the first line of cliffs on the eastern side, which was reached after only six more minutes. Here, the first pretty overhang of the day awaited us, beautifully highlighted by the warm mid-morning sun. The party now sidled at this level, on a wide, easy to follow ledge, discovering a string of magnificently eroded multi-coloured caves. One of them had a large area of flat floors, but we could not find any signs of a previous occupation.



A sunlit overhang. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Sandstone decorations detail. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Foojan underneath an eroded rock. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Next, we passed a small running watercourse, which featured a pool underneath a natural arch, discharging onto a waterfall. *This is what I expect the top of Natural Bridge Cascade would look like when we get to it*, I said to the guys. At 1056. A little further, a small scramble was required to climb higher and to avoid the waterfall in the main ravine. We then crossed above it, at 1106, and continued traversing on the opposite side. Here, to our delight, the dry, whimsically worn, yellow, beige and orange sandstone overhangs continued.



A mini- Natural Bridge Cascade arch. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Having rounded the next headland, we were now sidling above Alsophylla Glen on a wide, comfortable ledge, dotted with flowering Sunshine Wattle and *Hibbertia* sp. Soon, we had to descend a little, to pick up another flat level, but good walking conditions and dazzling cliffs continued. *A Wollemi Utopia*, I quipped, with a degree of cynicism forged by the years of exploring this amazingly complex and unpredictable landscape. At least, I was mentally ready for what came next.



Beautiful sandstone walls continued. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Flowering *Hibbertia* sp. Photo: Graham Groves.

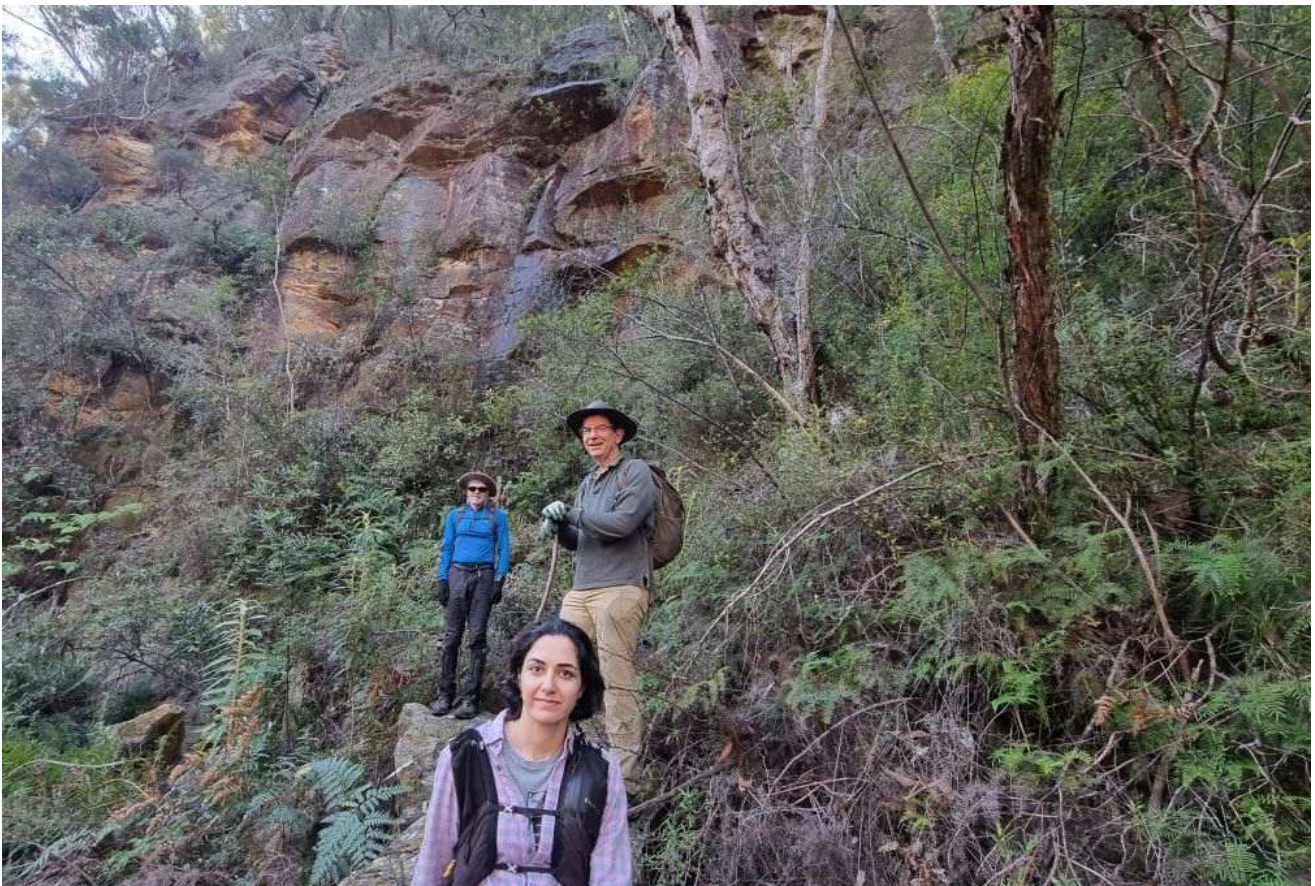


Walls detail. Photo: Foojan Firoozi.



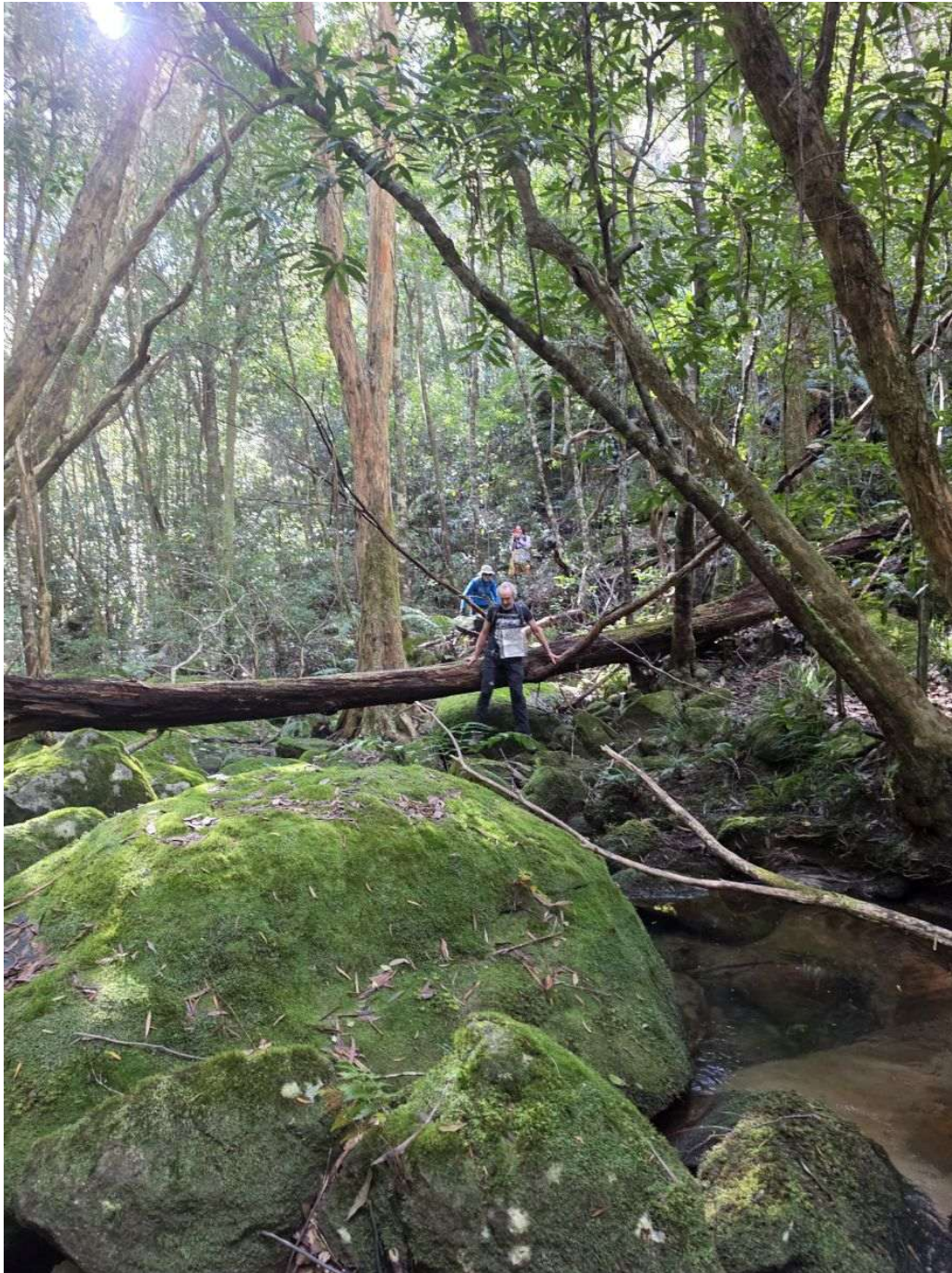
Walls detail. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

At 1208, the ledge, and all other possible ledges within our eyesight, abruptly stopped, and we plunged into an overhead-height, unimaginably dense, wet scrub. With enormous effort, we tore our way up, close to the cliff line, hoping to find an easier passage, but the terrain there was even more hostile – steep and slippery, forcing us further and further down into the sea of almost impenetrable quagmire of unruly flora.



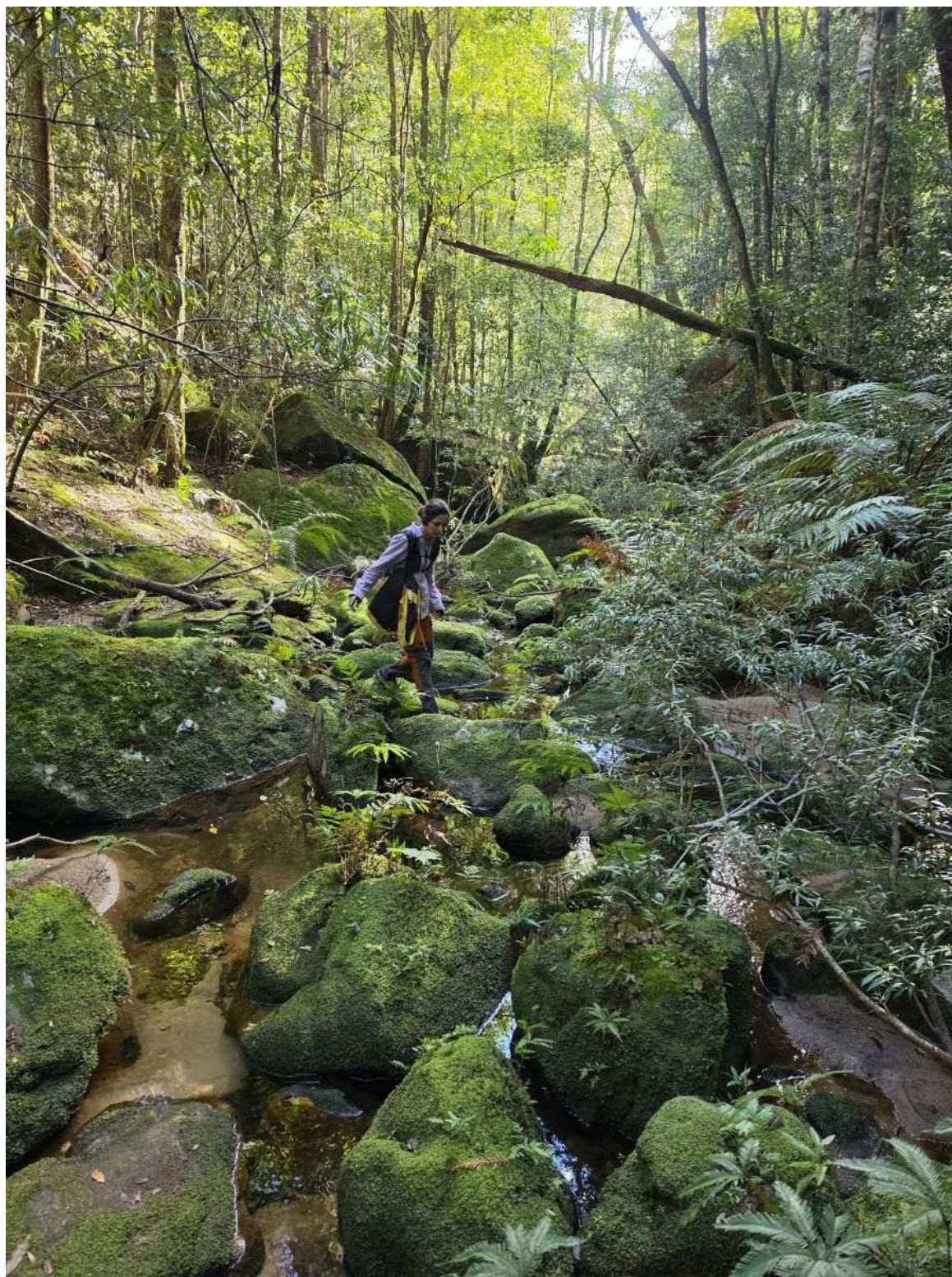
Chris, Foojan and Peter having a short respite from the dense scrub. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

After a half-an hour battle during which we advanced 120 metres, I decided to swallow my pride, admit a temporary setback and head down to the bottom of Alsophylla Glen. It only took us a few minutes to make it there, at 1244. Our reward was a total change of scenery, from the ridiculous scrub to the sublime rainforest gorge, complete with gurgling, cascading brook, tall trees and green mossy boulders – all magically lit by dappled sunlight. Wow, what a difference a few steps make! After the walk, Bernard analysed his Lidar maps and informed me that we would have had another 170 m of the thick vegetation to go through – at least 45 more minutes of hell – so I was very happy to have missed it.

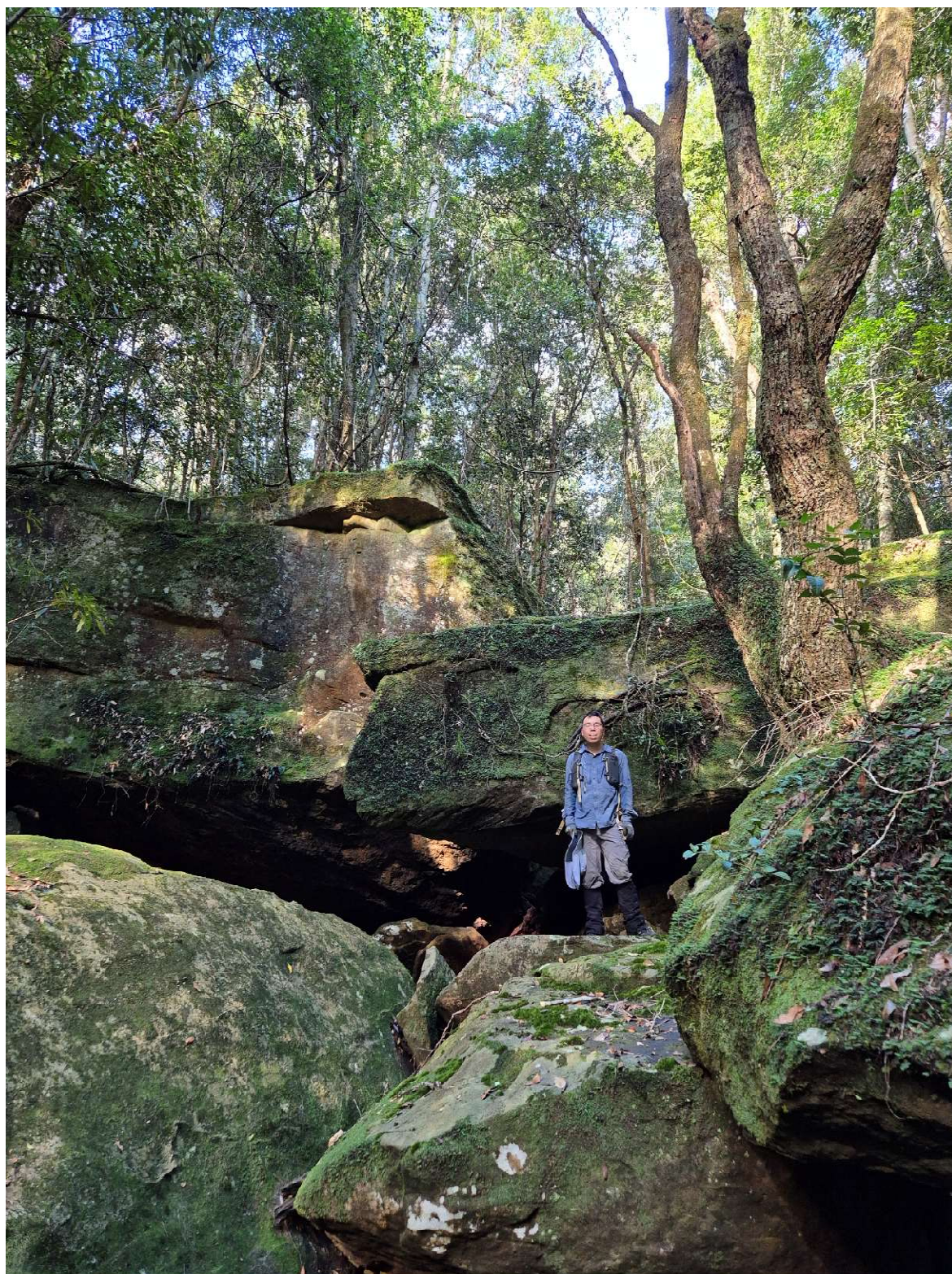


In Alsophylla Glen. Photo: Bernard Lo.

Having passed through Alsophylla Glen on 29/11/25, it was also somewhat familiar territory, so our progress was fast, lightning fast, compared with the previous segment. I noticed the creek had more water in it than last time, but, as before, there were long sections where it disappeared entirely below the creek bed sands. Between 1309 and 1324, the group enjoyed lunch sitting on large green rocks in the middle of the stream, surrounded by several hefty Water Gums, *Tristaniopsis laurina*.



Foojan in Alsophylla Glen. Photo: Bernard Lo.

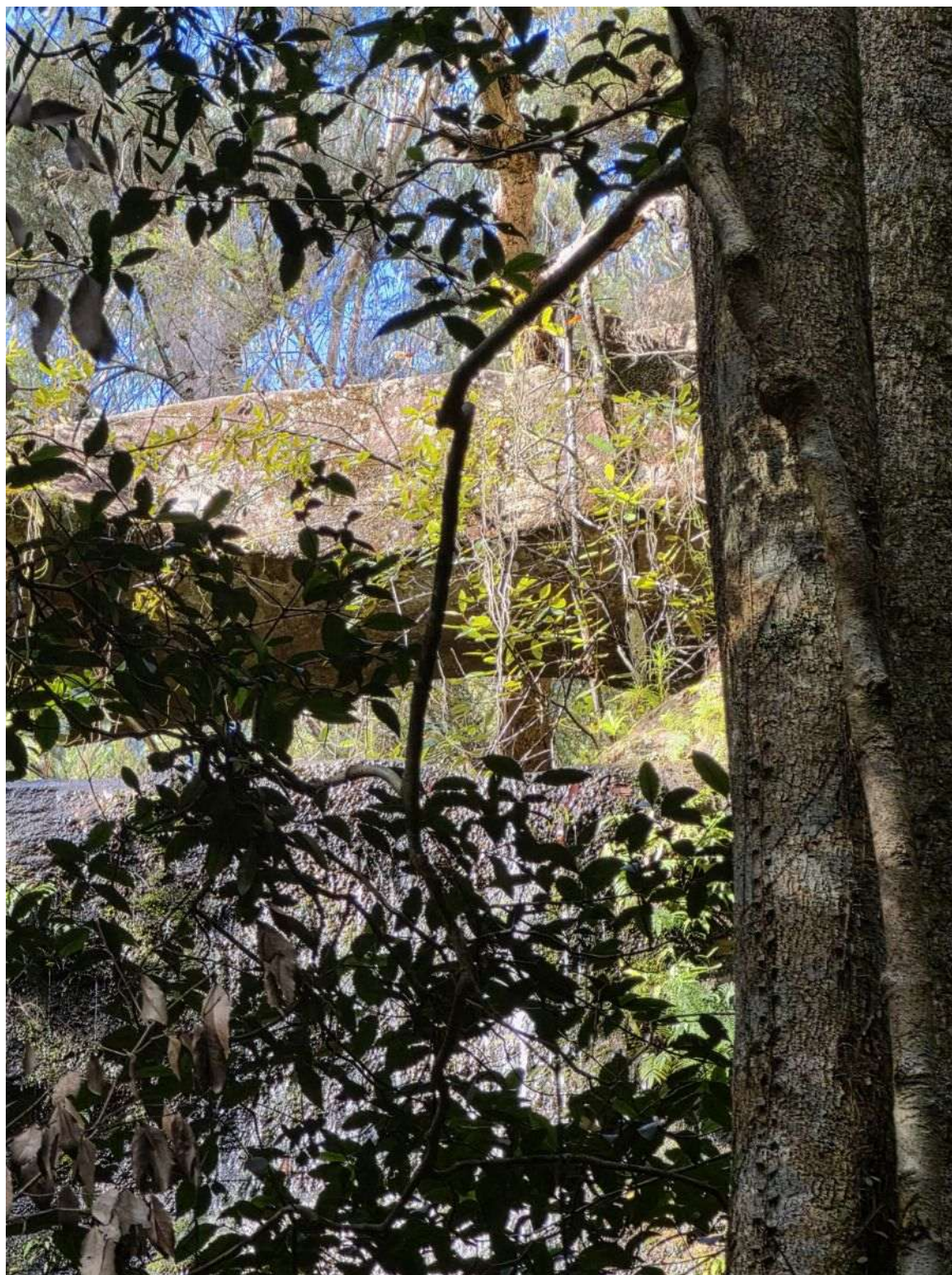


Bernard in Alsophylla Glen. Photo: Foojan Firoozi.

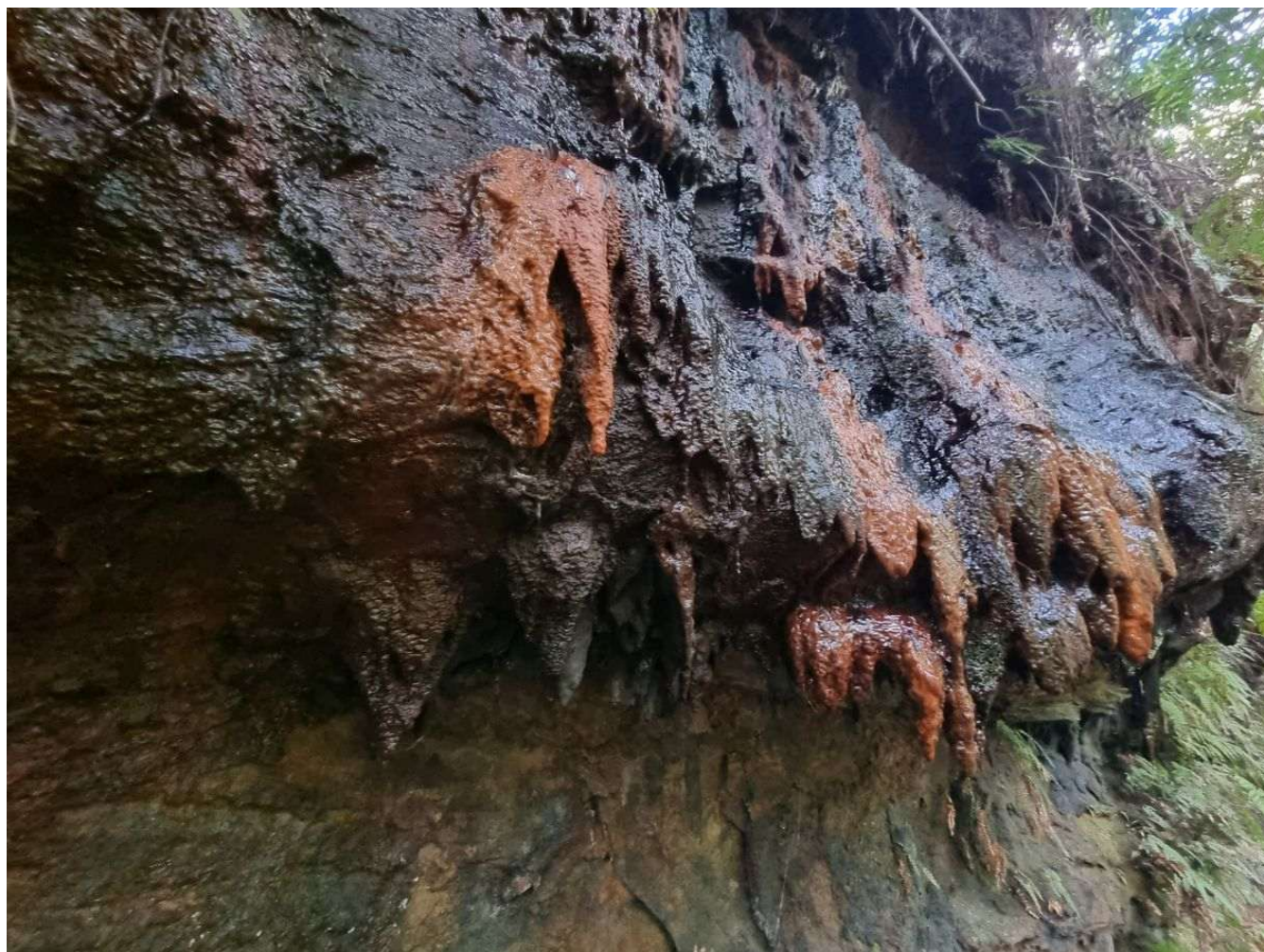
Our upstream journey through this beautiful rainforest ravine continued to be scenic and enjoyable. A few easy scrambles to get around deeper pools added more fun to the proceedings. By 1350, the party made it to the bottom of Natural Bridge Cascade. It is an impressive sight, but, similar to our first trip here, the arch crowning the waterfall was very hard to see and even harder to photograph due to the obstructing vegetation, direct sunlight and the falls being two-tiered, with the top further away from sight. At least we took decent pictures of the colourful stalactites on the walls adjacent to the cascade.



Bernard at Natural Bridge Cascade. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



The arch at the top of Natural Bridge Cascade. Photo: Bernard Lo (zoomed).



Stalactites on the walls adjacent to Natural Bridge Cascade. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

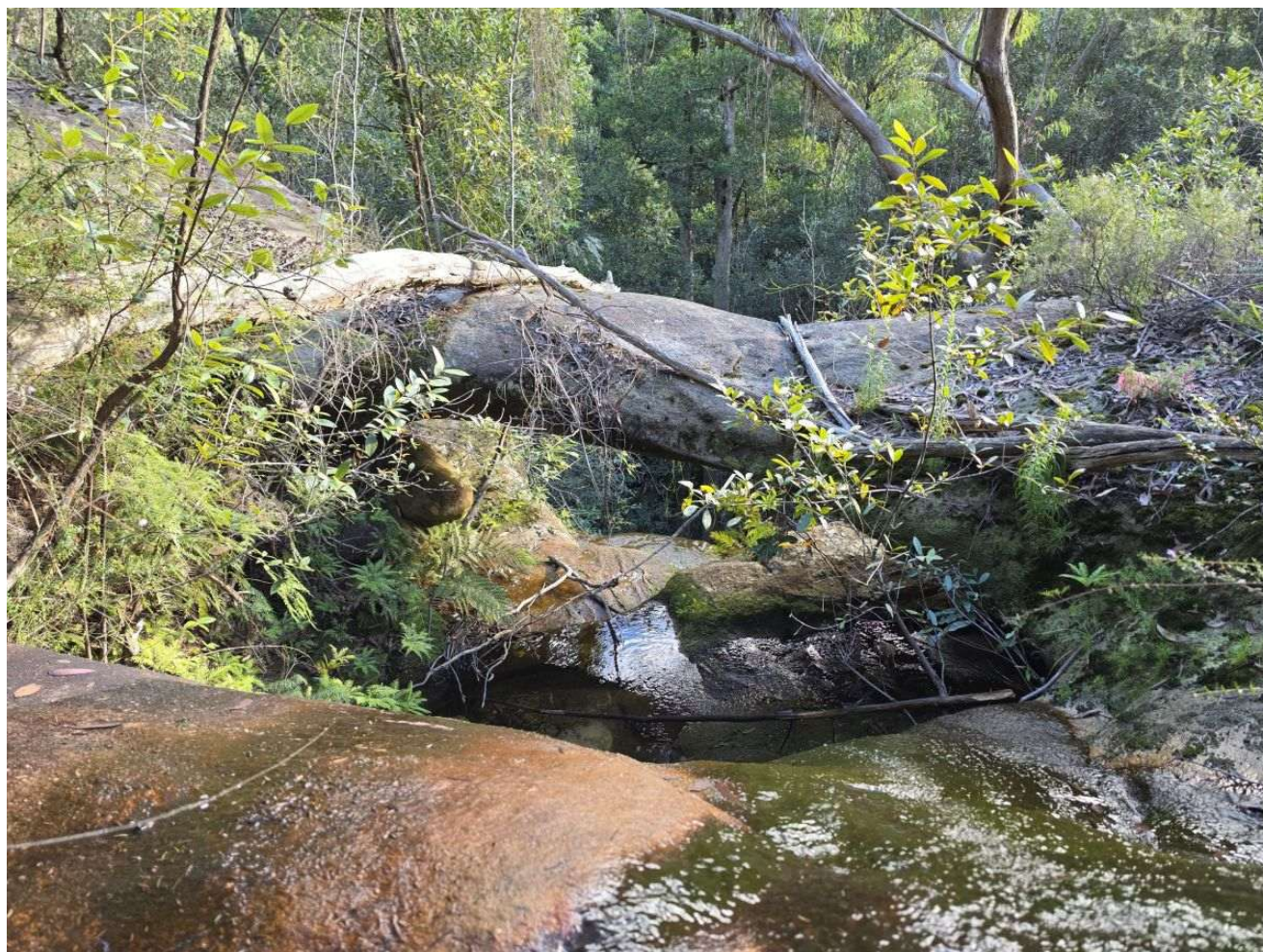
In any case, our plan today was to climb to the top of the cascade - something we did not have time for last time. Today, a few of us tried a narrow ledge/ramp immediately to the north whilst others waited. With some effort, that foray took us to the top of the first tier, but we could not see any safe routes further up from there.

At 1407, we were all down at the foot of the waterfall and headed upstream underneath the cliffs, looking for a break. There was nothing for quite a while, some 200 m, until, at 1415, a narrow ramp appeared that seemed to be going OK for a distance, before turning a sharp corner. What awaited us beyond the visible part? I went up to investigate, and it continued nicely, all the way to the top! In no time, at 1417, we were above the cliffs surrounding the ravine, where it was sunny, dry, and quite a few degrees warmer. A cluster of bright pink *Epacris longiflora* greeted us here, looking splendid in the bright afternoon sun.

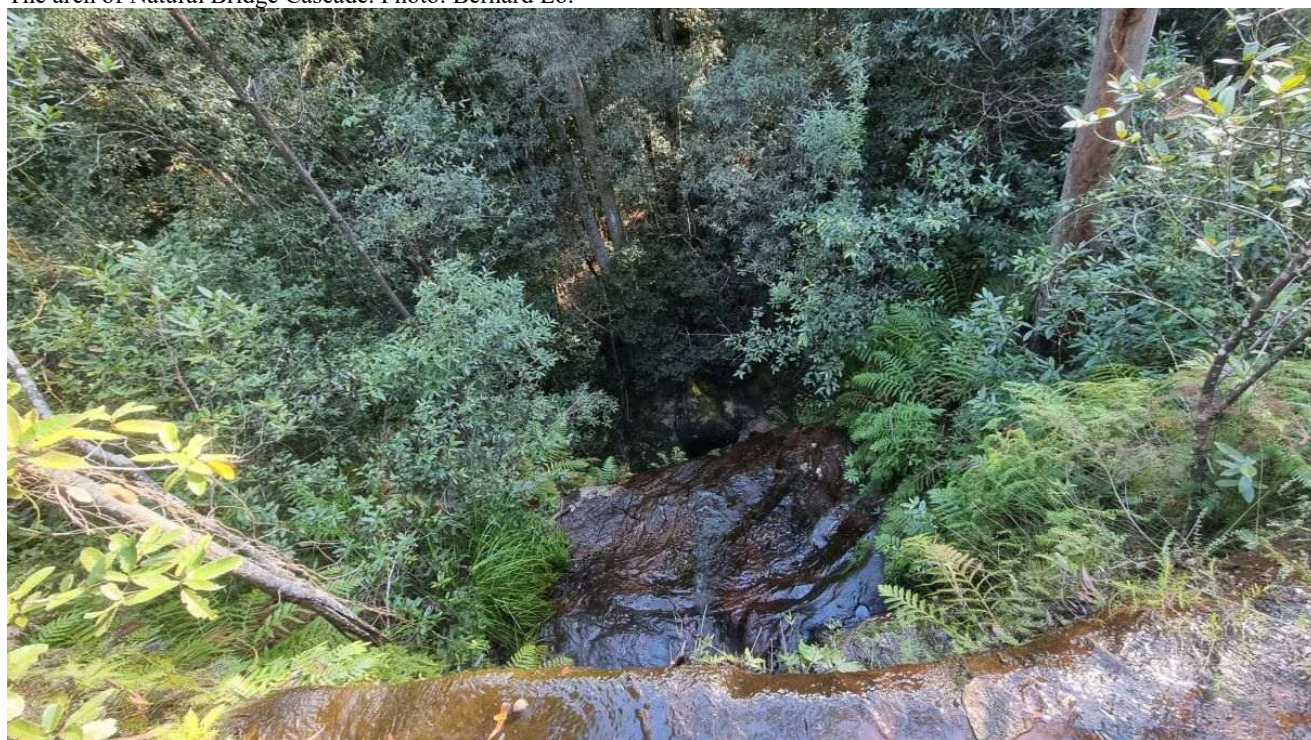


Epacris longiflora. Photo: Graham Groves.

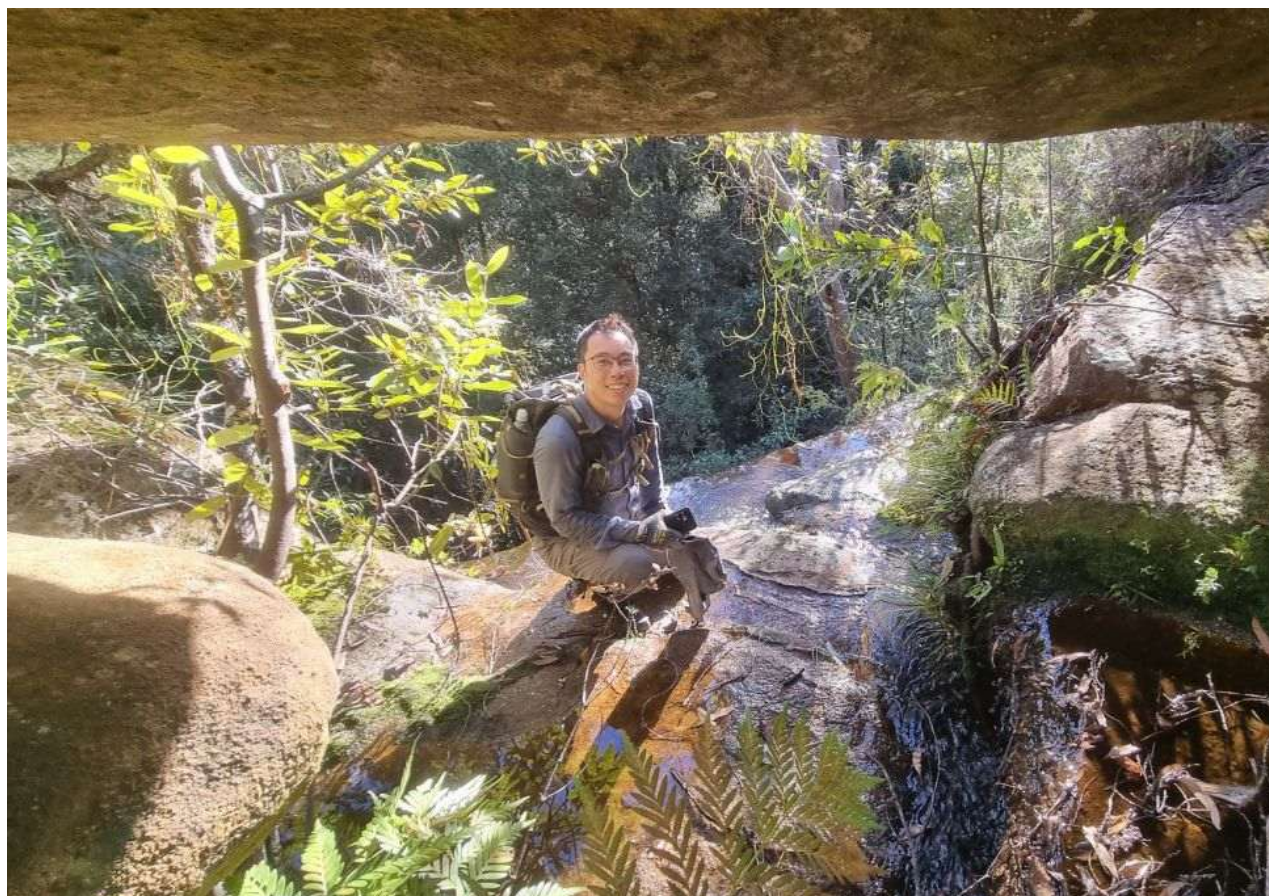
We now headed back north for a short distance and seventeen minutes later arrived at one of the main goals of the trip, the arch of the Natural Bridge Cascade. It did in fact look very similar to its smaller cousin we had encountered earlier on this walk. This arch was much bigger, measuring about 5 metres in length, 1.5 metres in height; it was wide enough for a person to stand on top (taking very good care, as falling down would not be an option here). Exercising even more caution, it was possible today to descend below the arch and approach the edge of the waterfall, to look down into the inky depth of the gorge below, but with any more flow, this would be suicidal.



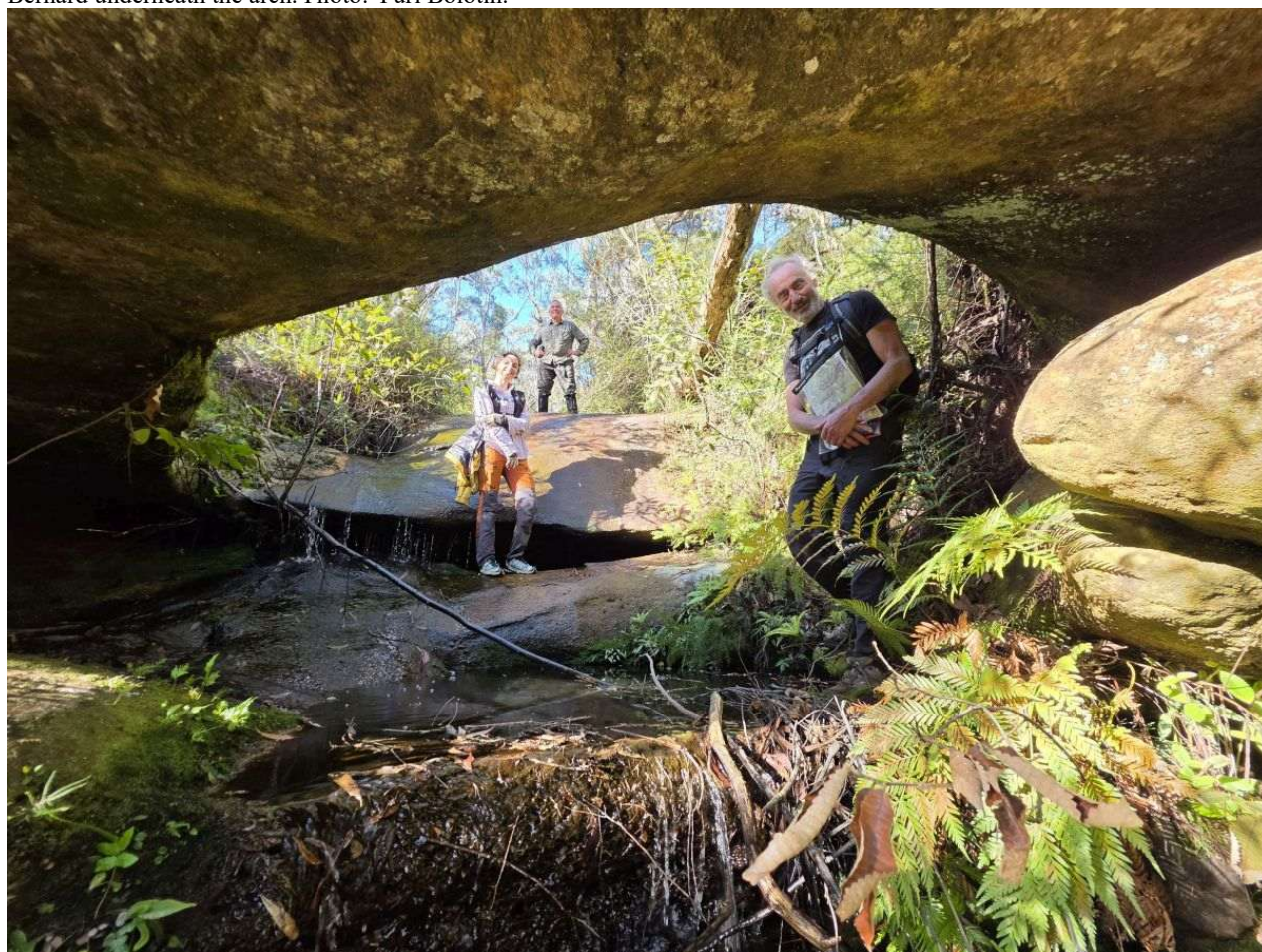
The arch of Natural Bridge Cascade. Photo: Bernard Lo.



The view down from below the arch. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



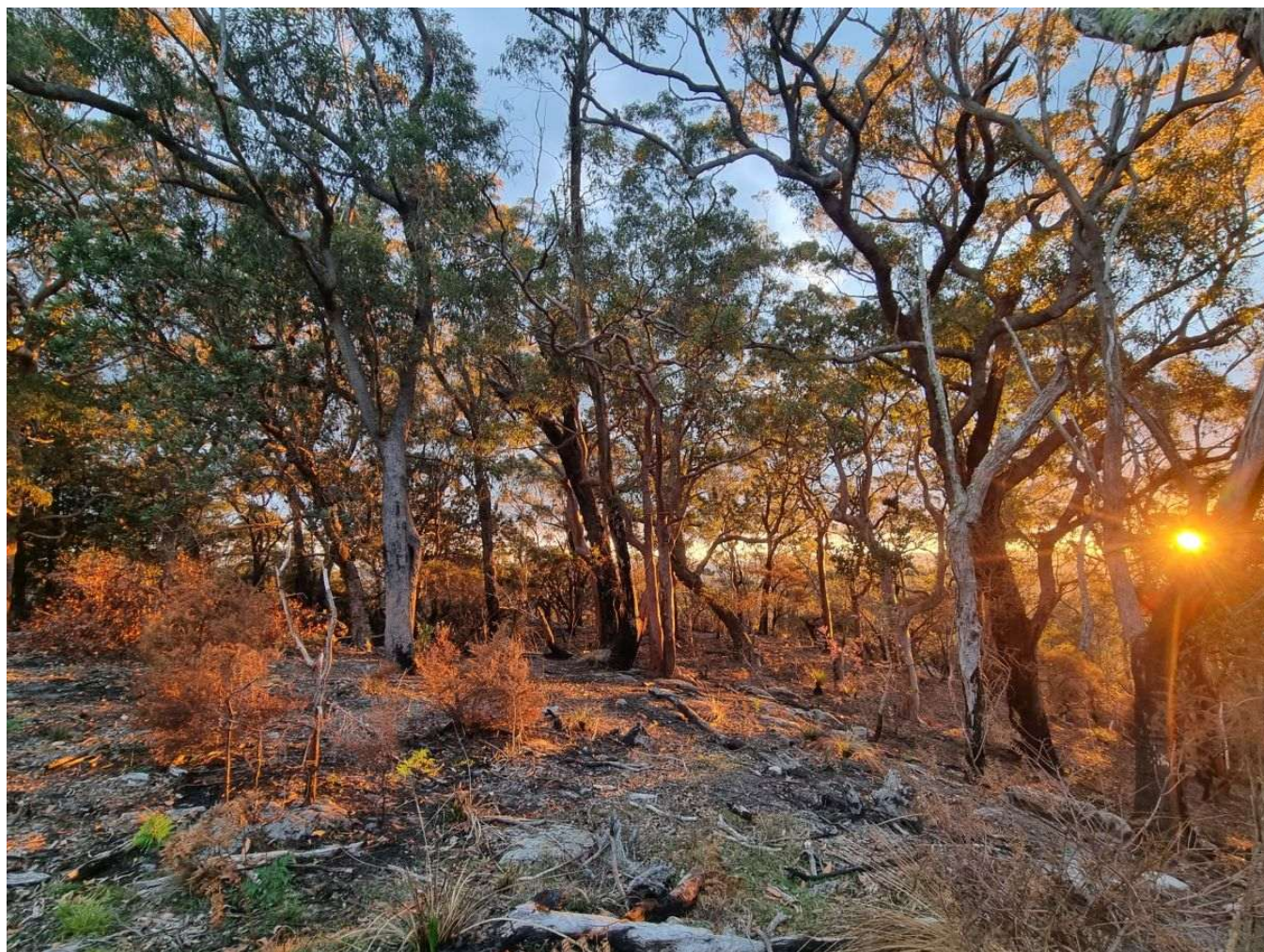
Bernard underneath the arch. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Foojan, Peter and Yuri seen through the arch. Photo: Bernard Lo.

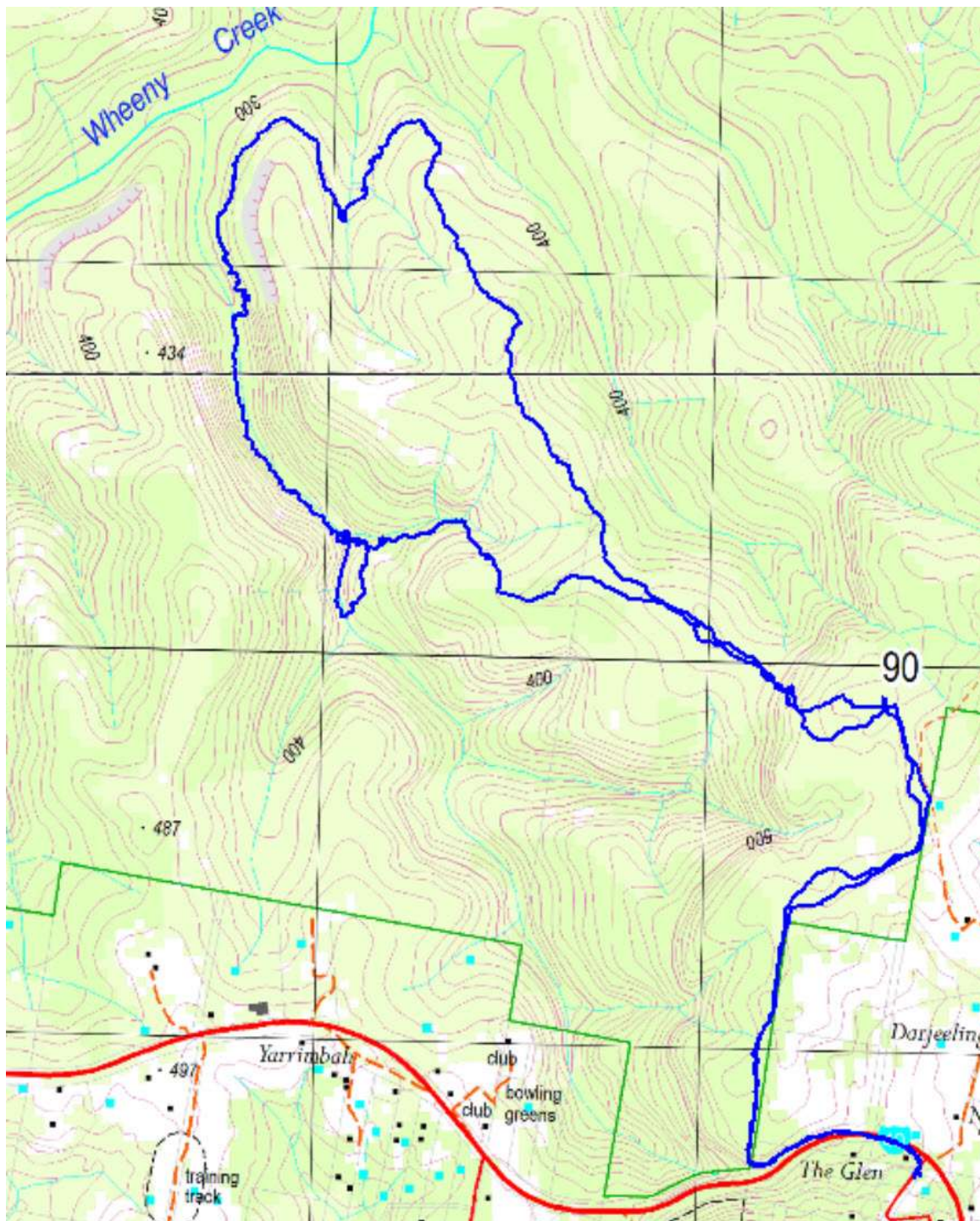
After an extensive photography session, at 1448, our adventure continued as we moved upstream and above the creek, until it had caught up with us nineteen minutes later. So far, the going was good, but the terrain ahead looked scrubby and wet, with some cliffs visible through the vegetation. I had been planning to have a look at them, but, given the time of the day, I decided to give that a miss, so instead we made our way steeply up to the top of the spur, reached by 1525, where the country was dry and the understorey, minimal.

Fifteen minutes later, the group made it to the main ridge that we had used this morning and by 1608, after a sustained, steep and steady climb, to the top of Peter's fault propagation fold. Walking above the fault, we were treated to a beautiful sunset and distant views of the country below, all the way to Mount Tomah, Mount Banks and the sandstone cliffs of Grose Valley. It took us just under an hour to reach our parked cars in the fading light of the shortest day of winter, by 1702.



Sunset view from the top of the escarpment. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Trip statistics: total distance 11.9 km; total ascent 574 m.



Walk topographic map. Recorded and prepared by Yuri Bolotin.

Table of Times, Locations and Grid References

Time	Location	Grid Reference	Elevation
0805	Cars parked and started walking	GR 7960 8870	550 m
0844	High point, start of the descent	GR 7949 8991	575 m
0858	Top of the fault	GR 7924 8990	545 m
0909	Bottom of the fault	GR 7914 9000	485 m
0959-1014	Morning tea	GR 7832 9111	425 m
1019	Head underneath the cliffs	GR 7825 9122	415 m
1025	Below the cliffs, start of traversing	GR 7827 9133	380 m

1056	Mini-Natural Bridge Cascade	GR 7808 9120	355 m
1208	End of ledges and start of scrub	GR 7773 9102	330 m
1244	In Alsophylla Glen	GR 7775 9087	302 m
1309-1324	Lunch	GR 7779 9057	310 m
1350-1407	At the bottom of Natural Bridge Cascade	GR 7805 9029	325 m
1415	Ramp/slot	GR 7805 9010	327 m
1417	Top of the ramp/slot	GR 7807 9011	355 m
1433-1448	At the arch on top of Natural Bridge Cascade	GR 7809 9030	345 m
1507	In the creek	GR 7836 9036	390 m
1525	Top of the spur	GR 7845 9018	450 m
1540	Main ridge	GR 7888 9016	480 m
1608	Top of the fault	GR 7924 8990	545 m
1702	Back at cars	GR 7960 8870	550 m