
Tuglow Caves – Dryer inside than out

18th – 19th November 2017

Text and photos Rafid Morshedi

Participants: Rod OBrien, Keir Vaughn-Taylor, Phil Maynard, Rafid Morshedi, Cyril Lagger, Joshua Parker

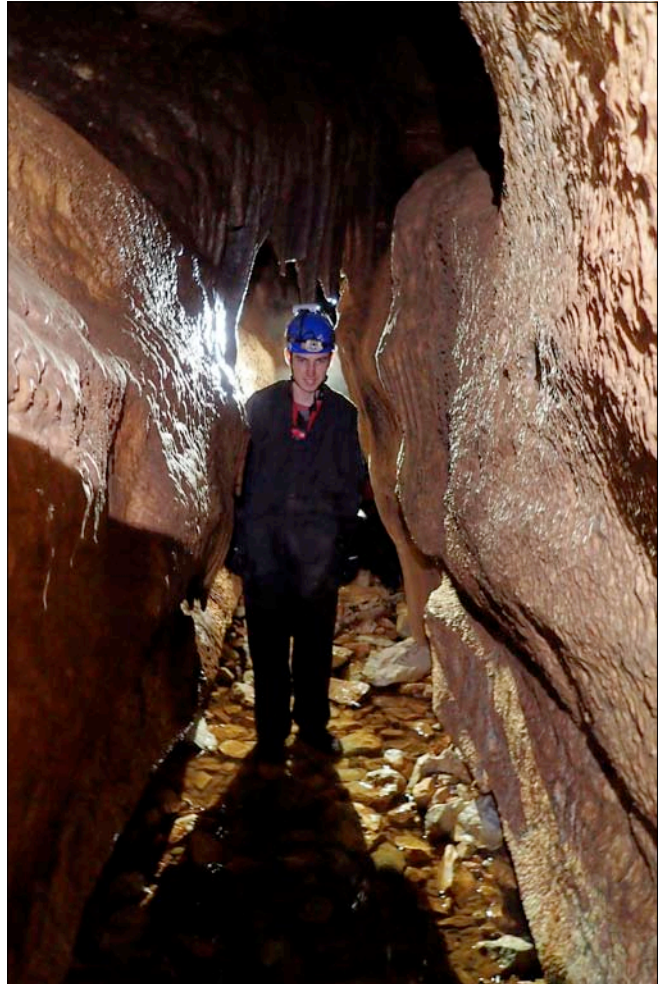
Friday 2017-11-17

It had been raining for the last few days so we were expecting the roads to be a little soggy. Phil picked up Cyril and myself from North Sydney station. We loaded our gear onto his trusty steed – the Subaru Forester and were off.

We stopped at the Pizza place at Katoomba along the way. Pizza Place Pro tips:

Call the place when you are at Hazelbrook and it should be ready by the time you get there. You should finish the pizza by Mt Vic and there is a stopping bay with a bin there where you may dispose of the rubbish.

Given the rain we drove in via the Oberon route to avoid sliding off the hill. I've always found pine forests a little creepy, but the thick fog and rain made it worse. We reached the campsite without incident and found Rod and Keir waiting for us. Josh, who



Josh in the stream above the waterfalls



Rod preparing to dive downstream Tuglow

was driving in from near Bathurst got caught up in the rain and arrived the next day.

Saturday 2017-11-18

The rain had not waned since the previous day. Strangely everyone was awake by 6.30 am, given that this was a SUSS trip the early wake up was highly unusual. Josh having camped at the top of the hill for the night arrived at around 7 am and we were at the cave entrance by 8 am – again highly unusual, the rain had really got to us.

Rod had prepared his 'red bundles of joy' in preparation for a dive at the downstream sump. We had a fairly efficient crew, with Rod rigging the pitches up

ahead and everyone else bringing packs through. There was very little sitting around, and we got the tanks down the pitches in no time.

While Rod prepared for his dive at the downstream sump, I took some photos, Josh, Phil and Cyril watched and Keir splashed around in the streamway. Rod started his dive, Phil and Cyril started surveying parts of the downstream streamway and Keir, Josh and I ventured upstream.

Keir showed us the scenic route towards the main waterfall and we climbed down towards it avoiding the swim. Keir's shoes had already proven themselves to be about as grippy as melted butter on a teflon pan, but he still managed to do most of the climbs so far without any trouble. However, the final chimney down to the main waterfall chamber proved to be more slippery than the last few climbs and a large splash was heard as we entered the waterfall room. No injuries were sustained and we continued as normal. The main waterfall was spectacular, or at least I thought so, but Keir informed me that the water was very low compared to its normal level.

We turned back to rendezvous with the others and found that they had already started to pack up the gear. There was some great teamwork on the exit and we bombed it out of the cave in no time and were out of the cave by 12 noon.

Having finished our caving for the day so soon, we went on down to the resurgence and looked at some of the other resurgences nearby. However, it was still raining and we were starting to get a little miserable so we made our way back to the cars.

Rod told us about the dive. He had continued with the underwater survey, getting it to the end of the current dive line at a depth of 26 m. After checking his gas supply and decompression obligations (Rod was using Nitrox to reduce his decompression time), he tied his reel off to the end of the line and pushed another 20 m along the continuing horizontal passage. We were back at the cars by 3 pm and had plenty of time for tea and biscuits as the rain continued on and off until the evening.



Cyril near the downstream sump

Sunday 2017-11-19

Finally the rain seemed to have stopped overnight. The sun occasionally made an appearance so the usual SUSS morning routine resumed and we consumed 20 cups of tea.

Eventually the rain returned so we started caving, Keir was diving today and Rod would be assisting. Phil, Josh, Cyril and myself went upstream.

We made the climb into Knights Knobbly Knob where we had lunch. It truly is a spectacular cave. We continued upstream and turned left onto a nice passage (Overhead Loop) with cave coral on both sides of the passage until we reached the muddy rock pile. I noticed the signature of the '158 Rosebury Rover crew' scribbled in the mud from 88.

We continued to the upstream end of the cave which was practically a trickle (< 10 cm of water depth). Time to turn around. We returned to the ladders, to find that Keir and Rod had already started hauling packs up. We joined the effort and were out of the cave fairly soon.

The Kowmung River had risen since Friday so we all exited via the western roads. Another great weekend away.