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## Horsing around at Cooleman

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Cooleman Plain 25-29 January 2018

Keir Vaughan-Taylor

Participants: Keir Vaughan-Taylor, Rod Obrien, Josh Parker, Megan Pryke, Tina Willmore, Shannon Crack, Lachlan Bailey, Peter Baxter, Miriam Noble, David Rueda-Roca, Ian Cooper



*Dive gear going to CP6 River cave*

*Photo Peter Baxter*

Arriving Thursday afternoon a low cloud cover and scattered rain greeted first arrivals. I had noble intent to cross the plain with some dive gear but after a long drive the shelter and tent operations dominated the afternoon. Cooleman appeared much greener than it has done previously with many flowers blooming across the hills. Flies are not so bad this year.

### Friday 26/1/2018

#### River Cave Downstream

Keir Vaughan-Taylor, Rod Obrien, Josh Parker, Lachlan Bailey, Peter Baxter, Miriam Noble, David Reuda

The team carried full dive kit for two divers, myself and Rod, to River Cave. We would dive the next day with the intent of surveying hopefully as far as Parallel Universe – a large chamber almost as far as our furthest exploration point upstream.

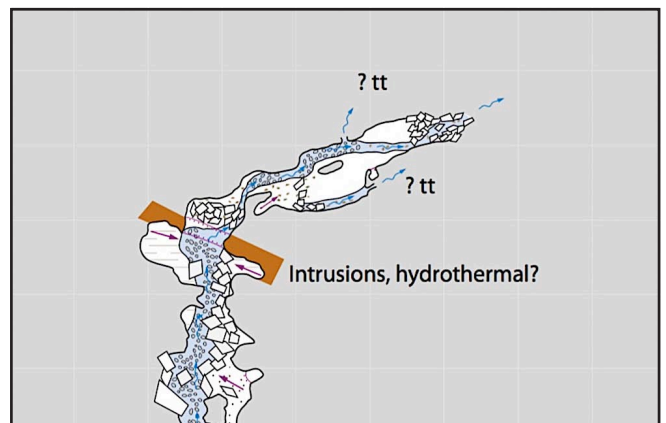
With the dive gear stored a short distance shy of the underground river we took the team downstream. There are two sumps to free-dive which we all passed without problems. On the other side is a lake fed by river water entering from a shallow stream that deepens into marble-roofed chambers. We were slowed by the enthusiastic photographers wanting to stop at every new chamber to get pictures. At the back of the cave we located the last

survey point on a limestone slab leaning against the left side of the passage just before the last lake. We photographed it to confirm to Phil we had found the right connection point.

Rod, David and I chained the survey tape taking measurements and logging the information, first through the “impentable” rock pile and down the other side into the river and along to the next rock pile through which a voice connection had been made with Murray Cave on the last visit.

We took the survey as far as was reasonable into the rockpile following the main water course. There is still, to my mind, a possibility to connect to Murray physically. The survey in Murray ends at the log book and so it remains to do another dive trip into Murray and take a few more survey legs into the rock pile from there. Based on our last trip into Murray I estimate there is still another 20 meters we can push into the rock pile. There is a voice connection through this rock pile to Murray Cave and the surveys suggest a gap less than 25 m. The rock pile sits directly below one of the large surface dolines between the Murray and River entrances. Noted in the last rock fall are two massive boulders within the collapse of red basalt and cold air flow emanating from above. It is dangerous and tight to go upwards in the rock pile.

By the time we had finished surveying, the rest of the team, largely sitting in wait, were getting cold.



*Downstream end of CP6 River*

*Grid 10 m, map draft Phil Maynard*

They were pleased to get going again for the return journey. The trip back to camp was fast because there was no need to carry gear.

### CP93

Ian Cooper, Megan Pryke, Tina Willmore

Tina, Megan and Ian went down the gorge to CP93. A long and very small tunnel was pushed heading north. At the end Tina could see that it widened but by then the squeeze was intimidating and after some looking, they had to give up. This passage is heading towards CP92 and a voice connection should be attempted. Due to the survey gear being in River Cave, this area has only a grade 2 sketch.

### Saturday 27/1/2018

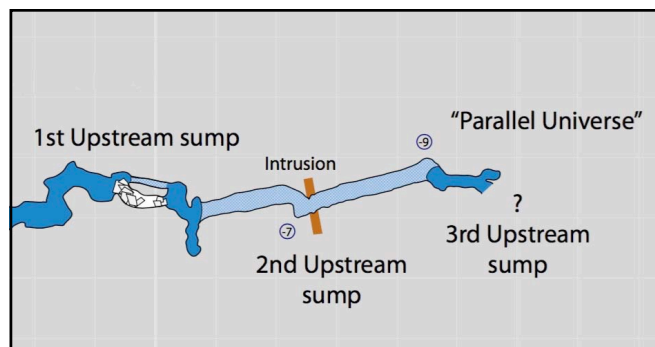
#### River Cave Upstream

Rod Obrien, Keir Vaughan-Taylor, Peter Baxter, Miriam Noble

Today we would do what we should have done a long time ago, survey the underwater passages in upstream River Cave through to Parallel Universe. The current survey finished in the lake beyond sump 1, where we began our first survey station connecting on the last upstream station possible in a dry survey.

I took the lead end of the measuring tape trying to find the longest leg possible for each survey station that would also be a good jump point to the next station. I would signal to Rod with two pulls on the measuring tape that I was on station. He would take compass and depth measurements then with two tugs on the tape signal to me I could let go of the tape. He would then move to my position and we would repeat the process.

Nearing the Parallel Universe chamber I was getting very cold. Once we surfaced in Parallel Universe I



*Parallel Universe, CP6 River*

*Grid 10 m, map draft Phil Maynard*

could stand on a mud bank with my torso out of the water and was able to warm up while Rod sketched in the shape of the chamber. At the far end there is a kink to the right where both Rod and I have explored into an underwater chamber. Plans to do a new push were abandoned because of time and I was pretty cold. Even so, I was very happy with our achievements with the survey. Our underwater time was 74 minutes. We are now familiar with the strange twists in the passage and our return dive was quick.

#### The Western Front

Ian Cooper, Megan Pryke, Tina Willmore, Josh Parker, Lachlan Bailey, Peter Baxter, Miriam Noble, David Reuda-Roca, Shannon Crack

The group walked up the North Branch stream to Harris Waterhole and Cliff Cave. The main North Branch Sink has changed, with the previous gaping hole having completely collapsed to be replaced by a shallow gravel-floored pool. Cliff Cave was fun as always; some time was spent with people squeezing down to the sump to admire the possibilities.

Next we moved south to CP66 (Rising Mist Cave), on top of the ridge. This is a 6 m tape climb into a single room. The Shannon was deployed, who reported a prospective dig at the bottom of the cave. We then kept moving SW into the trees to prospect for caves. Several promising dolines and holes were found. (Subsequently one of these dolines was pushed and has become CP187 Jrift Cave). We did find an obvious active stream sink into a choked hole. Again the Shannon was deployed 4 m down, but the cave is gravelled up. Subsequently this was recognised as CP65. We then walked back via River Cave and picked up the remaining packs of dive gear. The stream sinks in this area appear to be the source of the Altimira Alley stream in River Cave.

### Sunday 28/1/2018

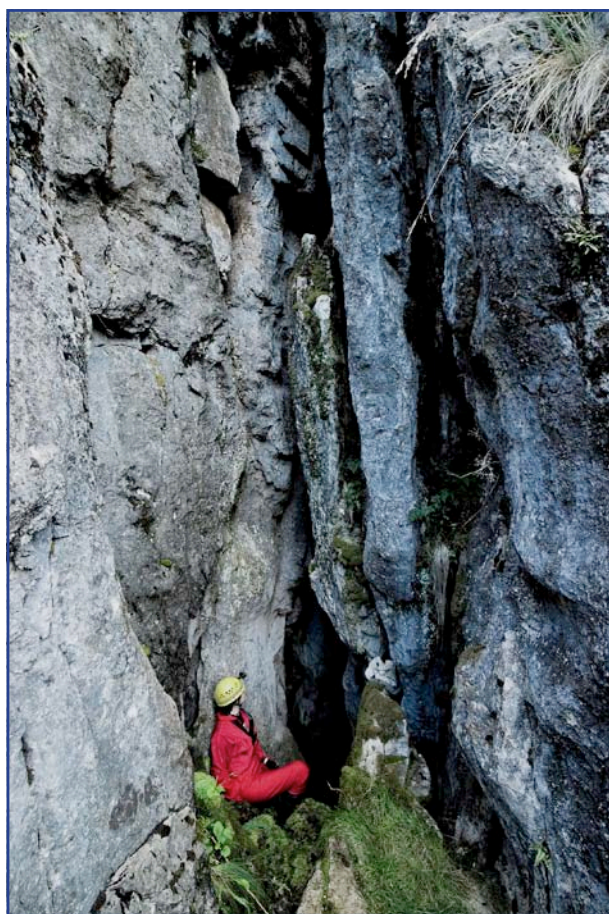
Most of the group went to Black Range Cave for a tourist trip. The Shannon was deployed into the downstream gravel grovel. This continues to intrigue as a way on to more cave. Then there were quick trips into Barbers Cave and White Fish Cave. About half of Caves Creek was sinking at Schrod-ingers Cave.

Rod, Josh and I looked at Easter Cave entrance but did not do the duckunder. Two horses that had previously joined us at Magpie Flat were encountered near White Fish Cave.



# CP6 River Cave, Cooleman Plains

Photos Peter Baxter



*CP6 entrance*



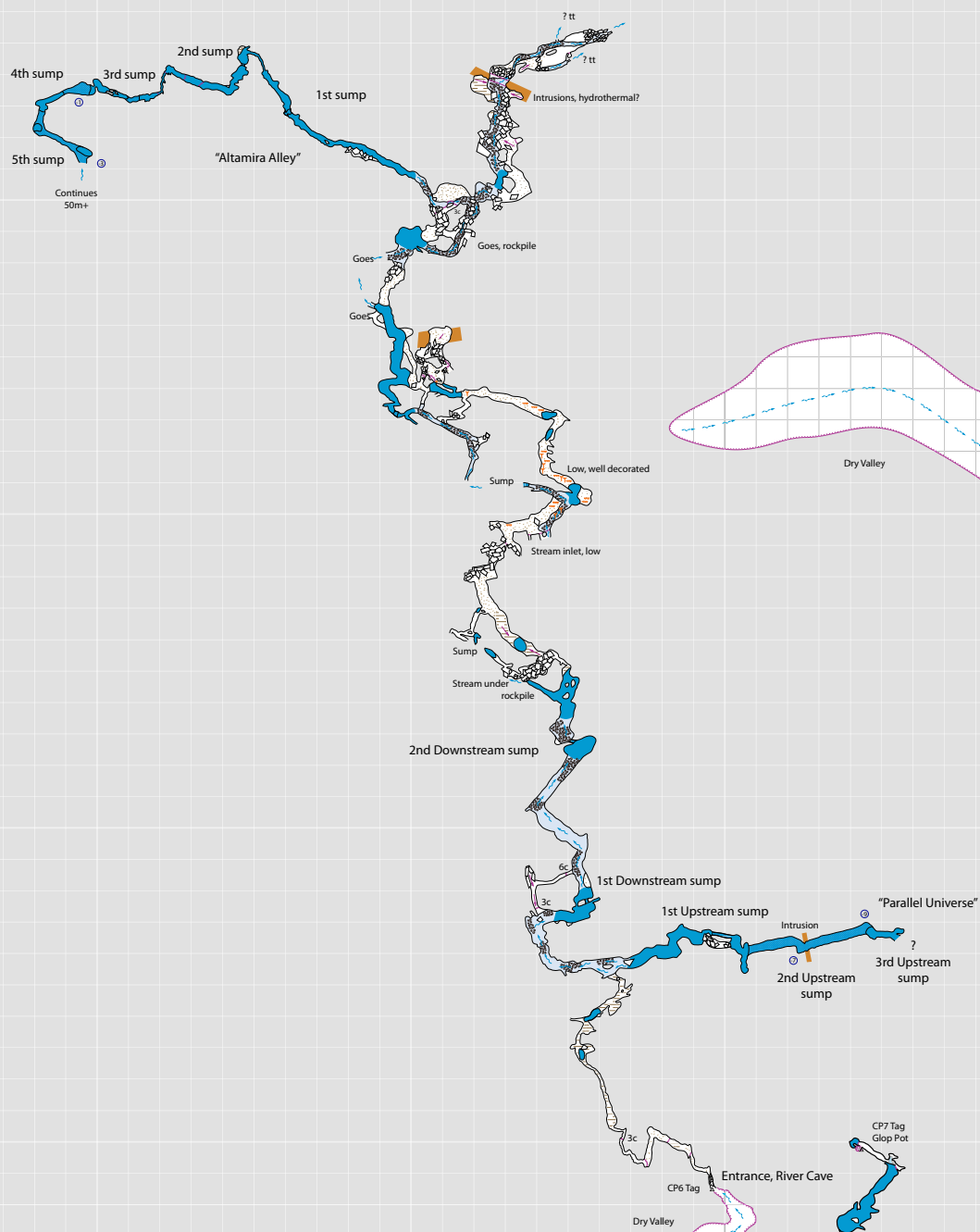
*Keir Vaughan-Taylor and Rod Obrien, preparing to dive upstream in CP6*

# CP6 River Cave

Coolman Plains  
Kosciusko National Park,  
New South Wales, Australia



ASF Grade 64c, draft Phil Maynard February 2018,  
Map No. JCP6/5558



CP6 River cave, Coolman. 2018 January version.

Map by Phil Maynard